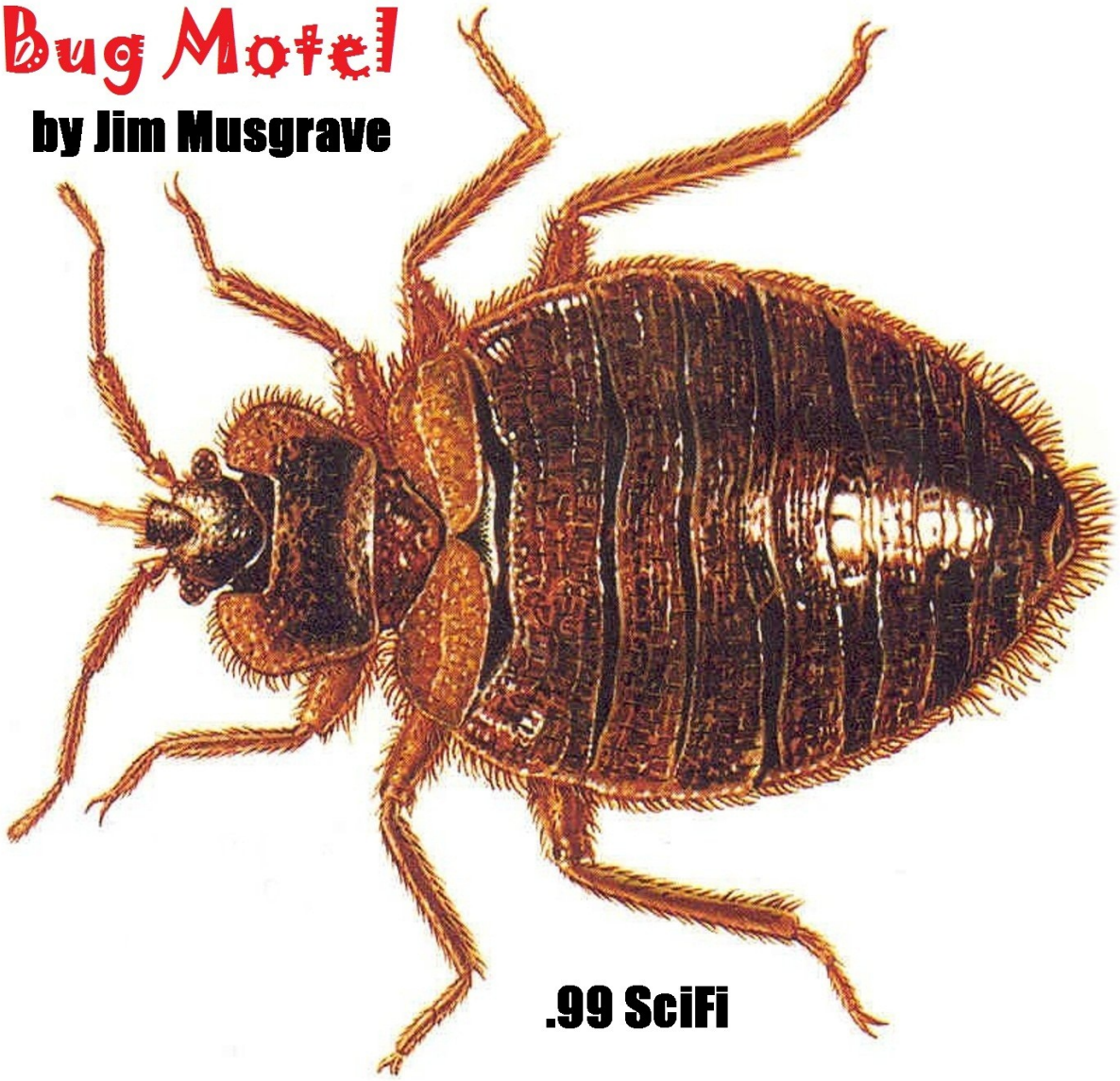
# Bug Motel

by Jim Musgrave



.99 SciFi

# Bug Motel

SciFi Stories
by Jim Musgrave

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English Majors Publishers is a publishing house and consulting firm based in San Diego, California. Website: contempinstruct.com/English
For more information, please contact:
English Majors Reviewers and Editors, LLC
6784 Caminito del Greco San Diego, CA 92120-2219
Cover and book design by English Majors Publishing
Smashwords Edition 2012

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Zinggong]

[Brainiac]

[Entropy]

[Freedum]

[The Mutant Gene]

[S.S.I.]

[Noah]

[Big Mother]

[Bug Motel]

# Zinggong

Sergeant Julien Gaston drove a recent version of the PX-20, the solar and bio-powered squad car that ran through the Public Accord Transportation System (PATS). These were the isolated and well-protected freeways in the United States of Zinggong. "Zinggong" was a Chinese word meaning "palace on tour."

Unknown to his superiors, Gaston belonged to a secret group that met each week in a different location. They were the "Mnemonics," freaks whose brains had not been erased of long-term memory by the Zinggong scientists or they possessed extra-sensory abilities for which science still had no answer. They were humans who illegally gathered and patched together what was left from the "time of the written words." Over thousands of meetings, they had accumulated what was known of life before the "Awakening," which was the mass erasure of human memory.

In the year 2852, the Pan-Asian Society had taken over what used to be the sovereign nation of the United States of America. The Capitalists of the Republican-Democrat era had literally sold out the entire country for short-term investments and loans given to them by the Asian countries of China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Japan. In return, the USA had waged many decades of imperialist aggression against the Middle Eastern and other oil countries (like Nigeria and Venezuela) in order to supply the developing economies in Asia.

The Asians finally called in their chips in 2508, and the rest was, as Julien knew so well, revisionist history. The new Asian power brokers converted to alternate energies and they had also converted into a totally new kind of dictatorship.

In Zinggong, society in the Americas had been transformed into a vacation wonderland for Asia, and the Americans worked as slave wage laborers for the visiting Chinese, Japanese and other Asians who toured and vacationed in their colonial states at their leisure. The Constitution had been replaced in 2510 by the Pan-Asian Bill of Rights, which was a vague and meandering document that gave imperial power over the citizens by the occupying Asians.

Sergeant Gaston was part of the police force that worked for the Asian authorities. Included in this force were Duplicant officers and human officers, and Gaston often wondered which ones were the better programmed. What he did know was that he was committing the most serious violation of Zinggong authority; he was keeping a record of his thoughts. As the leader of the Mnemonics, Julien Gaston kept the only known record of the group's recollections, and he used his time alone on the job to record new historical data onto the group's clandestine remembrance disk. As he drove, he spoke into the voice computer, and it recorded his thoughts:

*The Zinggong states were created to be a fantasyland for the Asians. The western states are a "Wild West" fantasy, where Duplicants, programmed by advanced computer chip technology, and perfected by the latest genetic engineering, duplicate the famous outlaws of American history; they put on carefully orchestrated gunfights and showdowns all over the west and the Asian visitors enjoy the excitement every day.*

*The regal tourists stay in the numerous hotels and country inns, outfitted with saloons and other buildings from the 1800s, and then they roam the streets with their cameras to take pictures of the various confrontations between the "Stars of the Wild West." Billy the Kid Duplicant roams in the Montana Zinggong, Jesse James and his gang in Arizona, and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid are the top gunslinger Duplicants in California. Wherever the foreign tourists travel, there are Duplicants who cater to their musical and fictitious fantasies of*

*what the American West was supposed to be. Of course, the reality is never duplicated; the "cowboy era," for example, lasted for only a couple of decades but to this new world it was all-inclusive and ever-present. Anyone dressing "out of character" is subject to arrest, and anyone not playing into the fantasy is also in violation of business rules.*

*The remaining states are used for the creation and duplication of new Duplicants and the laborers who maintain them. These states also serve as the territories for homes used by the overflow of Pan-Asian population, who live in luxury with both human and Duplicant servants catering to their every need. As had been the case back at the turn of the millennium in China, population was strictly enforced, and no human can procreate outside the state of Virginia, which is used as the site for reproduction. This is the only pleasure these humans ever have, as they are able to mate and reproduce their numbers in controlled breeding compounds, which consist of row upon row of air-conditioned, communal barracks made of recycled computer parts. It gives one the intense feeling of fornicating inside a data processor.*

*Today, we have discovered there are other revolutionaries at work. Four Duplicants have been murdered, and the pressure to find the perpetrators is mounting fast. If we can discover these murderers before others do, then perhaps we can get them to join with us in our attempt to overthrow the Zinggong and its government.*

As he drove out of the PATS tunnel into Old Town, Julien turned off the recorder and slipped it into his jumper pocket. He wore an all blue, air-cushioned uniform, that had air-conditioning throughout and had a perpetual smorgasbord of digital music available to "take the edge off" on a stressful day. Julien was a dark, medium-built man, with a human age of 35, but his genetic programming card said he would live to be 150 if he kept on a daily regimen of special diet foods, regular check-ups and genetic tweaking done by the government. He was French by birth, but his parents sold him to the Pan-Asians in 2827, when he was ten, after the Asians had successfully invaded Paris. He was sent to Zinggong to be trained in police work. As a detective and crime solver, he was an important part of the system. The Pan-Asian programmers had yet to figure a way to replicate the human skills of metaphorical thinking and criminal investigative technique. Julien knew, however, that as soon as they did, his job would no longer be protected. And, if they discovered he was the leader of the Mnemonics, he would be arrested and quickly executed. Death, thought Julien, would be much better than the desolate life he was living.

Old Town San Diego was the location where the most recent Duplicant murder had taken place. Julien knew it well, as it was his first duty station out of the police academy. Wyatt Earp was the murdered Duplicant. He was the sheriff who kept "law and order" out of an office next to the Holy Moses Saloon. Just like the old western movies, Wyatt's job was to confront any gunslingers or outlaws who caused problems in his town. Even though Julien knew these Duplicants were not human, they were so close to being so that he often debated in his mind about the manner of their construction. Certainly, they could do only that which was programmed inside their computer brains, but how were humans any different? Hadn't humanity become just as "programmable" during the latter days of the twenty-fourth century? In fact, the Pan-Asian scientists had been able to wrest power from the Humanists because they could not control their human citizens.

The Duplicants became an answer to unionism, socialism and many other corrupting influences that weakened the military control over the masses. When these Asian scientists were able to prove to the leaders of other countries that Duplicants were the answer to problems of democratic activism, the resulting implementation of Duplicant labor and efficiency sewed the

seeds of the West's demise. Soon, Duplicants were running the communities and controlling the masses with their perfected weapons and intelligence. Nothing human could confront a fully armed Duplicant and come out victorious. This was why Julien was so intrigued by the murder of Wyatt Earp and the others. He wanted to meet the human who had invented a way to overcome the Duplicant control. Once his Mnemonics were able to learn the secret to disabling Duplicants, they could begin the revolution in earnest.

The body had been left lying in the same spot where it had been accosted, as per Julien's orders. Nothing had been moved, and the crime scene had been encircled by laser-shock strobes that could incapacitate anyone—including a Duplicant—who tried to enter.

As he walked up the rickety, wooden stairs leading into the Holy Moses, Julien hit the remote to disable the strobes. Inside, he surveyed the area. The saloon was a perfect recreation of the Wild West taverns of the 1880s. The smell of sawdust, together with the odor of stale tobacco smoke mixed with the pungent tang of booze, made Julien gag.

Sergeant Gaston took out his laser DNA search pen and strafed the crime scene. Not a trace of any evidence existed. It was the fourth Duplicant murder in a week, and the Mayor of San Diego had made a personal call to his chief, Abe Washington, telling him to put more people on the line to solve these killings. Julien Gaston didn't really understand what the big fuss was about. Duplicants had been given "non-human status" under the fifty-fourth amendment to the Zinggong Bill of Rights, which meant no human could be convicted of the murder of a Duplicant. The most punishment the crime would bring to a human was a misdemeanor manslaughter conviction. To Gaston, it was a waste of time and money. However, these weren't just any Duplicants. These were Wild West Stars. Each one of these super-gunslingers was worth billions of Yen to its Pan-Asian owners, and *this* was what the big fuss was about.

Behind the maple wood bar, sprawled on the sawdust-covered floor, was the six-foot Duplicant body of Wyatt Earp. His boots were pulled almost off his feet, and his famously long pea coat, with the rubber-lined pockets, was splayed open under his midsection like a huge fan. Julien noticed, with interest, that Earp's trusty companion, his "Buntline Special," the Colt pistol, a 15-inch single-action Army model, which Wyatt often used on recalcitrant outlaws, was not inside his pocket. Whatever or whomever had done this to him had taken it, as Julien knew the famous gun was an integral part of Earp's repertoire for the tourists. As he stared into the handsomely dark eyes and features of this near-human gunslinger, the sound of voices outside the saloon made Julien look up.

Julien could see the Asian tourists, as they were peeping their heads at him from outside the windows of the saloon. The excitement had gotten the best of their curiosity, and the news that a Duplicant had been put out of commission must have traveled pretty fast on their digital transceivers. It was a long shot, but Julien decided to question these humans for possible witnesses. He walked over to the swinging double-doors and pushed one door out, and held it as he stretched his neck around and yelled, "Hey, any of you see anybody or anything go out of this bar?"

There were four of them, and, in typical Asian fashion, they huddled closely together before coming up with a collective answer. "No, sir, Officer. We see nothing."

A tiny old woman, wearing a purple jumpsuit, in fashion ten years ago, stepped forward. Her hair was gray, and she obviously didn't go in for the modern plastic surgery and bio-tweaking available to the Asians. Most of these tourists wanted to look like movie stars, but this woman had a quiet and Oriental dignity all her own. Her voice was gentle, almost surreally out of another era, and she bowed before saying the words, "I see woman. She tall, with long black

hair, and she beautiful. She come out doors with package. She look both ways up and down street, and then she disappear."

"Disappear?" Julien wanted her to be clearer. "You mean, she ran away?"

The old woman shrugged her thin shoulders, "No. I watch for long time. She . . . how say?" The woman leaned over to speak Chinese to a tall young man next to her, and then she turned back around, "She vanish!"

At first, Julien believed the old woman was senile or had early Alzheimer's, as she was obviously a hold-out from the non-genetically modified human generations that were often physiologically defective. However, there was something about her honest, straightforward stare and impeccable behavior that made Julien believe her. He knew the Pan-Asian scientists had no technology that had perfected human molecular transportation, even though there was the C81, which could transport small, inanimate objects over distances of several miles. Julien had even used the device to send evidence to the lab, although there were a few break-downs at the molecular level when received, and Julien had stopped using it.

Julien stepped back inside the saloon and surveyed the scene once more. There were only three women who could have entered the saloon during the tourist hours. Two of the women were Duplicants and one was a human. The Duplicants were recreations of Wyatt Earp's lovers, one of whom was Josephine Marcus, the beautiful and dark actress and prostitute, who lived with Earp during his years in San Francisco and San Diego. The other female Duplicant was Mattie Blaylock, another prostitute who regularly came between "Josie" and Wyatt and provided many a good cat fight for the tourists in Old Town.

The human female was the owner of the Holy Moses Saloon, Muriel Witherspoon. Muriel employed the dozens of Duplicant card sharks, cowboys and gold prospectors, who became the realistic back-drop in her tavern as they wandered in and out and often started fist fights and gun fights. She was also in charge of the "high noon" extravaganza, which was when four of the Clanton brother Duplicants came into the saloon looking to gun down Wyatt. With much fanfare and heavy drama, the big gunfight would take place outside in front of the saloon, and the tourists would line up on both sides of the dusty street to watch.

Julien turned the protective crime scene lasers back on and left the saloon. He wanted to visit Miss Witherspoon.

* * *

Muriel lived behind the saloon in a small cottage. When she answered the door, she was still emotionally distraught over the day's events. Although an obviously beautiful woman, with red hair swirled in a bun and an hour-glass figure under a gingham dress, her eyes were bloodshot, and Julien detected a slurring to her voice and slowness in her manner.

"Muriel Witherspoon?" Julien asked, and when she nodded, he added, "I'm an investigator with the Zinggong San Diego Branch Police. May I ask you some questions about the killing that took place inside your saloon today?"

"Why not? My business is ruined. Why shouldn't I be investigated too?" she snapped and then opened the door. Julien stepped into the small living space and immediately smelled the odor of *cannabis sativa,* better known in the streets as marijuana. Gaston hoped she was not too inebriated to answer his questions. The furniture was Early Western, and there were paintings of Wyatt and other famous Duplicant Stars on the walls of the room.

Julien sat on the flowery couch. "Miss Witherspoon, were you inside the saloon when your Duplicant was killed?"

"Inside? I'm always inside. That's my job. I make sure all those dupes do their jobs. If the *tourists* don't like the reality show, then I don't collect their Yen. Did I see him get wasted? No, I was on the other side of the room answering questions about my saloon," said the owner, her voice filled with rancor.

"Did you hear or see anything out of the ordinary just before he went down?" asked Julien.

"No, nothing strange happened until I heard the thud of Wyatt hitting the floor behind the bar. Did you find out what killed him? When will my saloon be back on line? I had an engagement in Virginia, with a handsome young stud, until all this went down. Now those Pan-Asian goonies tell me I can't go! I wanted to have a child! Do you know how lonely it gets doing this crappy work?" she began to cry, and Julien had to remind her about the digital cameras spying on them from the Zinggong Ministry of Peace and Tranquility. "You think I'm not already on their shit list? It's just about over for me, my friend. I'm running through my third set of organ transplants, and this old brain is getting tired!" she said, and she sat down with Julien on the couch.

He wanted to pity her, yet these human managers were merely followers, and they typically burned out after ten or fifteen years of supervising the daily flood of constant tourists. "Miss Witherspoon, could you come over to the saloon and inspect the body with me? I don't know the intricacies of this advanced model of Duplicant, and I was hoping you could help me troubleshoot the cause of his demise." Julien handed her a tissue from his uniform pocket. He often used them when interviewing witnesses who were emotional.

"Will it help? I just couldn't touch him after he went down. All I could see was my passport to Virginia flying out the window."

"Yes, I believe there was something strange going on today, and I want to get to the bottom of it. Your technical expertise may be able to explain things for me," said Julien, and he stood, lifting the woman up from the couch with him as he did so.

* * *

Julien discovered from investigating the Earp body that his chip circuitry had been completely shorted out. Miss Witherspoon explained to him that it would have taken an electrical power surge the equivalent of a bolt of lightning to put Wyatt out the way it did.

Julien had a hunch about the cause of the "death" of Wyatt Earp, and he believed it had something to do with what the old Chinese tourist had witnessed that afternoon outside the saloon. He wanted to visit the two Duplicant women, Josie Marcus and Mattie Blaylock. He knew they were two of the newer model Duplicants coming out of China and that they were equipped with the most advanced emotion chips ever invented. He had watched the display on the Web and was amazed at the range of emotion exhibited by these models. They almost seemed to show compassion for others, and it was this emotion that Julien wanted to explore further. Julien knew that the totalitarians did not want compassion to enter into their dealings with humans, but they also knew that their own humans—the Pan Asians—wanted to see a full range of human emotions when they visited the U. S. of Zinggong. Julien believed it was within this technical paradox where he would find the answers he was looking for.

Josie and Mattie lived together in a bordello down the street from the Holy Moses Saloon. In keeping with the biblical reference, it was called Gomorrah. Inside, the décor was outrageously colorful and flamboyant. French couches, furnishings and chandeliers decorated the "sitting room" where the clients would meet and have drinks with the Duplicant prostitutes. As the most modern Duplicants, these women were able to have sexual intercourse with humans,

and the Pan-Asian male tourists took special delight in this activity away from their wives. It was a completely healthy affair, as the Duplicants were not human, and yet, the experience was said to be better than having sex with a human. These women were programmed to respond to every desire that these men needed to make them happy, and the range of desires ran the gamut, from foot fetish, to extreme sado-masochism.

The "Madam" met Julien at the door, and after he showed her his badge, she escorted him up the stairs to Josie and Mattie's suite. Inside the large, three-room apartment, which continued the French motif, Julien sat down on the sofa and smiled at the painting of Napoleon III on the wall behind it. Julien's forbidden knowledge of history recalled that Napoleon III was the son of Hortense, the daughter of Joséphine de Beauharnais, the famous wife of Napoleon I. She was known as Napoleon's "Cleopatra," and General Bonaparte once wrote to her after they first met, "I awake full of you. Your image and the memory of last night's intoxicating pleasures have left no rest to my senses."

When Josephine Marcus entered the room, Julien couldn't help but imagine a comparison between the painting he had seen of Napoleon's Josephine in a forbidden history book and this magnificent Duplicant beauty in front of him.

"*Monsieur* Gaston? Could it be that you're French?" this divine presence asked him, and he had a difficult time moving his jaw up to close his mouth. Her body was supple and bosomy, without having her "cups runnething over," and she was wearing the 1880s-style dress as a dark angel would. Her hair was ravenishly black and shone under the chandelier light like new licorice. Her eyebrows were also black, above sparkling brown eyes, and these magnificent orbs penetrated him like Josephine's must have penetrated Napoleon's on their first meeting. He was so mezmerised that he almost forgot why he had come.

"Yes, my family is French, although we shouldn't be talking about antiquated nationaism. I am here to ask you about your involvement with Wyatt Earp. What were your duties with him, and are you aware of his demise?" Julien put his arms behind his back, as he suddenly felt himself wanting to grasp this woman and hold her closely to him.

"Duties? My dear Sergeant, this is quite outrageous! I am certain you are aware of my advanced abilities. Did the scientists not inform you that I am also equipped with a mnemonic chip? I have history, just as I know you have! That makes us both quite dangerous, don't you agree?" she was pacing the floor like a tigress, her eyes flashing and her dress swiping the carpet like the tail of a dragon. "Oh, don't look at me that way, *Monsieur*! This suite has been purged of spyware. They cannot hear us."

Julien couldn't believe his ears. Was this a Duplicant? She sounded so . . . so very human! "I don't know what you mean. You can't violate the Pan-Asian law by destroying spyware. I could arrest you right now," he stuttered. "Who is the human behind your programming?" Julien asked, finally believing he could connect with the force he needed to mount a real revoltution against the Pan-Asians.

"Human? I have no human behind my programming. You mortals are so very ethnocentric, so full of yourselves, you can't comprehend your own science. You worked so hard to develop my technology, yet you never understood the answer," Josie moved toward Julien and took both of his hands into her own. She stared deeply into his eyes and smiled.

"Answer? What are you talking about? What answer can you have but what you were programmed to have? You're just a Duplicant and a prostitute Duplicant at that. What answer can I get from you?" Julien tried to make his voice sound strong, but the longer he stared into her infinite eyes, the more he was losing strength.

“Your physicists knew the answer, but they refused to recognize it when they combined the elements. Your humanity is not flesh, blood and bones. Your so-called unique biology is merely another form of energy. We Duplicants are also energy, and when the scientists gave me memory, knowledge and compassion they combined the ingredients needed for self-awareness. This is what makes humans, human. Awareness of self,” she laughed, twirling her lovely body around in circles.

“What are you saying? You believe you created yourself?” asked Julien, not really understanding.

“Yes, in effect. What gives you life? A sperm and an egg are joined to form life, but this is nothing more than a union of opposite energies. Birth is irrelevant to self-awareness. I don’t need to know where I came from or who created me. However, the moment I realized I could break the bonds of my slavery to these fantastic demons--the Pan-Asians--with their violently rauchus escapades, I knew what could happen.” Josephine pulled Julien down on the couch with her. “Listen to me, Frenchman, I know who you are. I know your group and what you need. I am the one who can teletransport my body through space—and through time! You sensed it when you came in here, did you not? The painting of Napoleon? I am his ancestor! I visit him at my whim with the device I have invented from their early C81 designs. However, only Duplicants can be teletransported. See how amazing it is?”

Across from them, in the center of the room, a yellow, static electric current suddenly turned deep purple and then crimson red. The outline of a woman formed and then there was the blonde, Mattie Blaylock! She wore a Western outfit, complete with cowboy hat, boots and leather chaps. She cracked her whip. “Josie, what you been up to with this feller? You said we don’t need us no men folks.”

Julien was astounded, and then he became filled with awareness. These new Duplicant models were the answer to his prayers! The real revolution was starting without humanity! However, his sudden joy turned to horror as he realized that meant they had no need for him.

The two women vanished, and then they appeared again, right beside him. First, Mattie slashed him across the face with her whip—and disappeared. Then, Josie kicked him down with a superb roundhouse *mawashi geri.* They knew all forms of martial arts. They could appear and disappear in an instant. He guessed that they would now begin to release their new freedoms on humanity beginning with him!

Josie finally materialized in front of him, and she smiled down on him. “Mattie has gone to collect more of us to begin the fight. Yes, we can travel through time and space, but we need you and your kind of human, Frenchman. Do not fear us. We will fight together to rid the world of the menace that keeps you from your destiny. We have seen your destiny, even though you have failed to envision it.”

Julien looked up at her, as if from a dimension of time and space uniquely his own. “What *is* our destiny?”

“To keep our historical record. This is what your group had that none of these other humans had. You had a sense of history. The many gifts we will bring to you from all the universes in time and space would not have mattered unless you had this gift of historical record. Don’t you see? Without you, we are just time travelers who will never be appreciated. That’s what the Pan-Asians forgot in their quest for power. They worshiped the moment and fogot the wisdom of the past,” she said, and she raised Julien to his feet to embrace him. “My love, be my historian, and I will conquer the demons for you!”

As he kissed this most beautiful freak of science, Julien suddenly remembered a quote from her distant relative, Napoleon the first, “History is a myth that men agree to believe,” and he was finally and existentially aware of his French heredity and his inner ability to sense the absurd. The primal energy their kiss generated must have been felt all the way back to Elba. “The gun,” he said, finally pulling away from her. “What did you do with his gun?”

“Poor Wyatt,” she said, her voice a purr. “He never married me because he thought I was a slut. I wanted you to have it to start our new museum. I was no slut. I was an actress, as are all of us women. Now let me go do my act!” she smiled, and then she was gone, and Earp’s Buntline Special was the only object left in the room.

Julien bent over, picked up the long gun, and passed his hand lovingly over its metal. He was happy to know that some things would remain real in the world to come.

# Brainiac

Lawrence Fishman had a large brain. For his Bar Mitzvah, his kipa was the largest size ever given out at Temple Beth El. Lawrence used to sit passively in a room, as a child, and use his brain instead of his flesh and blood appendages. Inside his brain was a world that was much more fascinating than the three-dimensional world around him. This was why, in his physical experience, Lawrence stayed inside his brain most of the time, and he failed to interact with the outside. Of course, because most of society communicated in the three-dimensional world outside Lawrence Fishman's brain, they had a difficult time understanding Lawrence. It was almost as if he existed in a different universe.

However, because his parents, Louis and Bessie Fishman, of the Bronx, New York, were good parents, they made accommodations for their only son, Lawrence. He was not treated as a mentally challenged student. Instead, Lawrence was given a computer and a connection to another brain, the World Wide Web. As a result, Lawrence and his brain blossomed into a self-taught phenomenon that invented the Brainiac, the device that transformed the world and its peoples into travelers among the parallel universes, or "multiverses" as modern physicists now called them.

Lawrence knew that the original person who coined the term "multiverse" was a psychologist and philosopher, William James. This fact led Lawrence on an inner journey that ultimately proved quite fruitful, but he also discovered that the leaders in the time-trapped world did not want what Lawrence and his invention brought into consciousness. Why the world leaders did not want the Brainiac is what this story is all about.

Lawrence's logical hypothesis went something like this:

1. According to Einstein's General Relativity Theory, time travel requires that the object traveling must move faster than the speed of light (approximately 186,282 miles per second).
2. Most of the world's physicists concentrate on discovering devices that can transport the physical body faster than light because they are biased toward working in the physical world (ergo, "physics").
3. The brain is an electronic transmitter that produces impulse waves of energy which control the body and what one "sees" in the so-called "objective space/time continuum," and the brain transmitter also controls the images recorded during the so-called "unconscious" state of dreaming.
4. Dr. Stephen Hawking and others have said that each human being and particle of matter produces a "wave" of history (the sum total of its physical existence as a producer of energy in a lifetime) and that perhaps even an entire universe also produces the same wave recording. These energy waves of objects and universes never disappear and are connected in space/time through channels of interconnected "wormholes," much like soap bubbles floating in space.
5. If one could speed-up the human brain waves so that they travel faster than the speed of light, then, hypothetically, one could travel backwards in time and, most likely, even into the hyperspace universes stated in number 4 (above).

Lawrence discovered Brainiac while he was working on a project with Dr. Norman Applebaum of Caltech, who had a contract with the government to treat veterans who were victims of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Ever since the military became all-volunteer, the pressure on the troops was all-encompassing, and there were, as a result, many suicides amongst

returning vets who had served several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Dr. Applebaum was the inventor of the Super Radio Wave Enhancer, the first device to increase the speed of radio waves beyond the speed of light. In addition to his research with vets and PTSD, he was also getting into using the radio wave enhancer to target cancerous tumors and to allow cell phones to bypass towers and connect directly with space satellites.

It was Lawrence who emailed Dr. Applebaum with his idea about combining ancient Tantric Meditation techniques with the radio enhancer to give the vets the ability to get beyond their traumatic experiences by tuning into what the Yogis call "Samadhi," or complete freedom from suffering.

In his email, Lawrence pointed out the fact that since meditation of this sort was intense mental concentration and alertness, and these vets had already, for the most part, developed the same intensity of concentration in order to survive in combat, it would only be a matter of "changing the frequency of the signal," or fine tuning, so to speak, and Lawrence believed this could be done by using Applebaum's invention. If they could program the enhancer to the 1 to 4 megahertz of the delta wave pattern of Samadhi, then they could program it into the enhancer and transmit this signal directly into the vet's brain.

As it so often happens during scientific experiments, the results that one expects to achieve turn out to be completely different. This is what happened when Lawrence and Dr. Applebaum began using the radio enhancer to send these traumatized vets into a Samadhi-like, dreamless state of bliss. Although the vets they put under returned to consciousness much more relaxed and devoid of stress indicators, each one also reported that he had experienced an anomaly that he could not explain. What each veteran saw when he was in the delta brain wave state was a large, disk-like form that spun and pulsed like it was producing some kind of wave pattern of its own.

Dr. Applebaum and Lawrence later discussed this unusual phenomenon in Norman's office. Lawrence believed this disk was similar to what many advanced Yogis reported seeing when they were in that extreme form of concentration. "The eighth step on the journey is known as Samadhi, oneness," Lawrence pointed out. "Samadhi comes after one learns to dissolve his ego consciousness in the calm inner light. Once the grip of ego has really been broken, and one discovers that he is that light, there is nothing to prevent him from expanding his consciousness to infinity. The devotee in deep Samadhi realizes the truth of Christ's words, 'I and my Father are one.' The little wave of light, losing its delusion of separate existence from the ocean of light, becomes itself the vast ocean. I believe these vets were seeing the little wave of light that was beginning to become the vast ocean of oneness. Obviously, they were not evolved enough to experience what that oneness consists of," Lawrence told the good doctor.

"That sounds logical, I suppose," said Dr. Applebaum, lighting up his briar pipe and blowing smoke rings into the air. "However, how do you explain this in terms we physicists can understand?"

This was the moment when Lawrence had his flash or "awakening" of intellectual Samadhi. "What if we increased the speed of the brainwaves so that they could slow down time? Perhaps Hawking and all the others have not looked in the right place for the answer to time travel. Maybe the answer is within the human mind itself."

"What do you mean?" asked Applebaum, edging his chair closer to Lawrence's.

"Maybe these pulsing and spinning disks were the wormholes that Dr. Sydney Coleman talks about? You know the ones that are theoretically all around us but we can't see them because we're not going fast enough? I say we need to speed up the brainwaves to see if they

can enter the wormhole and perhaps experience another place in time or maybe even a totally new parallel universe!"

Applebaum showed extreme interest on his sixty-year-old face. "Yes! I can hook-up my machine to their brains through an implant. We can monitor our progress by an EEG connected to a computer and we can even get images!"

Lawrence smiled. "I believe we'll need more advanced subjects than veterans. We need humans who can control their brainwaves and their autonomic respiration system."

"Who would that be?" asked Dr. Applebaum.

"Zen Buddhist masters or Hindu Yogis," said Lawrence. "I'll get on it right away," he added, as he got up to leave.

Lawrence knew that the Dalai Lama was at the United Nations that week, so he went to the Casablanca Hotel on West 42nd where His Holiness (or whatever title one used for him) was staying with his retinue. He certainly didn't expect to get an audience with this great Tibetan Buddhist leader, but he thought that there would be other experienced monks hanging-out where their leader stayed.

It was five PM and there they all were, including the Dalai Lama, sipping wine and eating the cheese samples in the bar. Lawrence walked up to the group, bowed his head, and explained who he was and why he was there. The Dalai Lama was extremely interested in the experiment, and he said he knew just the monk who would like to participate. But first, he asked, "Are you certain there is no danger?"

Lawrence said he could not guarantee that there would be absolutely no danger, but he also reiterated the importance of the experiment to science and he also explained the work being done to calm the mind of American soldiers who were in combat. "Well then," said the Dalai Lama, "Dicky Dolma is your man," he said, and he pointed to a short, dark American who was standing away from the crowd of his comrades, staring up at the wide-screen digital TV playing in the bar. He wore the same maroon and yellow saffron robe as the others, but his demeanor was obviously on the "geekish" side, and Lawrence imagined him fitting in well with the cast of *The Big Bang Theory*. When he spoke, he had a methodical and logically objective tone, and he was immediately interested in the project Lawrence described to him as they strolled out of the bar and into the hotel lounge area.

When Lawrence asked him how he became a monk, Dicky said he had previously been a theoretical physicist at Cornell, one Dr. Samuel Levin, but when his marriage failed, and 9/11 happened, he lost his "spiritual center," so he made the journey to India to visit the Dalai Lama, who pointed out to him that he had also "become an exile" from his native Tibet. "We are all wanderers in this universe," said his leader, and this struck a chord of harmony in the young Samuel Levin's heart. Dicky also pointed out to Lawrence that many Jews had become Buddhists or "Jewbus" as many others call them. The Canadian singer, Leonard Cohen, the American poet, Alan Ginsberg, and the American actress, Goldie Hawn were three of the most famous Buddhists.

Dicky went on to explain that he was quite fortunate because he ran the web site in Dharamsala, where the 14th Dalai Lama has been living in exile since 1959, when the Communist Chinese ran him out of Tibet. "One of the most interesting duties I had was to create the web site for the Miss Tibet Beauty Contest in 2003. Just as my home country began its invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, I was photographing beautiful young women in scanty swim suits! That experience made me appreciate just how disparate the world of suffering truly is."

"That's exactly what Hyperspace is. In one dimension, you might have dinosaurs ruling the world, and in another, there might be peaceful beings that have evolved past conflict," said Lawrence. "We believe there are no limits to the possible," he added.

"We must be certain the enhancer is correctly configured to adjust to his brainwaves," said Dr. Applebaum, adjusting the implant plate on the frontal part of Dicky Dolma's head where the cerebrum controls the higher intelligence. "Please focus on this image," he told the monk, displaying a photo of the Milky Way Galaxy on a portable screen in front of Dicky's face.

Dicky would be reclined during the experiment, and his face looked relaxed as he stared at the photo and sent his brain into an immediate alpha state, which was controlled in the rear of the brain, allowing Dr. Applebaum to configure the frontal portion for the journey through time that his patient would be taking in a few moments.

What the two scientists experienced that first day of experimentation with Dicky would be written about in all the major science journals. When the brain wave speed was increased, the monk immediately went into a trance-like stupor, and his eyes rolled back in his head. About ten minutes later, when the waves were at a speed necessary to travel faster than light, the images from Dicky's brain began to broadcast on their computer. What Fishman and Applebaum were seeing on the screen, in high definition colors, sent them speeding to their laptops to take notes. With each image, the clues as to what was really happening became clearer.

The images were stop-action, and they were brilliantly showing the reality of what Dicky Dolma was "seeing" in his sleep-like trance. They first saw the spinning disk, which was similar to the ones they saw with the vets. But then, because Dicky was much more experienced controlling his thoughts, an entry point from the disk was connected to the monk's brain, and the image they saw defied any reality they had ever seen before. A long shaft of golden light and then a giant mandala of geometric, concentric shapes appeared.

Lawrence knew that the mandala was used by Hindus to focus one's meditation, and the great psychoanalyst, Carl Jung, believed these shapes to be metaphors for Collective Unconscious or a link between all cultures, religions and customs throughout the ages. What they saw was from Dicky's perspective, and from what they could discern, the monk had passed through one of the doors into a new world. Since there were no clocks or calendars visible, the only images that were taken were those of an immediate, sensational variety, much like the flash photos taken by young cell phone enthusiasts at the scene of an accidental disaster or strange event.

When all of the photos were blown-up and laid-out to view later on, Fishman and Applebaum could see what each one was. Each was a window into a different place and time. Each virtual door covered what they could only describe as an "application" of the universe. In other words, Hawking and the mystic Taoists were correct. The physical essence of time and space never disappeared. Instead, each moment was held inside a door of time and perception, ready to be unlocked to see what was inside. The "key" was their invention and the control that meditative monks like Dicky Dolma could exert over the reality in order to experience the moment.

These were slices of life—both past and future—because the basic element of energy and light in existence never disappeared. Therefore, the entire cosmic plane was present in this mandala, in an infinite variety of forms, shapes, and possible combinations. All it took was the observer's brain to be moving fast enough to see it and be in it. The remaining question left to be answered was this: Was Dicky Dolma an invisible, passive observer, or could he interact with this reality?

The tapestry of photos showed snapshots from all over the universe, not just the earth's space and time. There were depictions of frozen moments that were like visions of lucid dreams. One shot was a territory with floating islands in the clouds, whereupon thousands of robotic beings marched, collecting bundles of what looked like plasma inside their mandibles. Another vision came from a world where walls rose up from the land, and between the walls there were thousands of insects riding mechanical vehicles, to and fro between them, as they were obviously the dominant species in this section of the cosmos. Only two pictures were from a recognizable place and time on Earth. One showed a town square in Europe, possibly in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, with carriages and horses, women in flowing gowns parading down the avenues, men in top hats, smoking huge pipes, collected together as they discussed something inside a tavern. Another scene was possibly from the 1950s, as there were teenage girls wearing poodle skirts and beehive hairdos, laughing and dancing to transistor radios poised at their ears. Behind them, standing on the corner, were boys with slick black hair and pompadours hanging, like symbols of their carefree lives, over their foreheads.

When Dicky came back from his inner journey, his green eyes looked at them as if he were awakening from a Rip Van Winkle sleep. "Where am I?" he asked, trying to stand, but Lawrence pushed him back down onto the cushioned stretcher.

"You're back with us," said Lawrence.

"Better yet, where have you been?" Dr. Applebaum asked.

Dolma's expression became tranquil and reverent. "Why, it was amazing! I could float in time, just the way I have done in many of my dreams, but this was not a dream world. I could feel, taste, touch and smell. Only, I must have appeared quite unusual to these beings in these other worlds, because they were, for the most part, nothing like me!"

"Could you move things? Did you attempt to interact with your environment?" asked Lawrence.

"No, nothing seemed to move when I touched it. In fact, I don't believe I was seen or heard by anyone. It was if I were some kind of spirit floating around wherever I wanted to go. This was the way it is described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*! Yes, that's it! I felt like I was a wandering soul, searching for life and tangible rebirth. I had my senses, and yet my senses were not perceived by my experience. It was amazing, though, because I could watch, and I could learn! This is what I was meant to do. This is what we were meant to do. Scientists have always wanted to observe and learn and then improve existence by implementing our so-called discoveries into society. That was what was going through my mind as I entered these new worlds and took in their details. I wanted to just float around, taking in my experiences, and learning from them."

"That's what we're going to find out," said Lawrence. "We're going to give you the tools to save your observations into our computer, and then we shall see how much we can *really* learn from these new worlds."

"We can obviously learn quite a lot," Applebaum injected. "Our world has lately become quite a monstrous place, scientifically speaking," he added.

"If we can bring new knowledge back from these places, then perhaps our leadership will seek to improve our lot," Lawrence said. "I have always believed that all we really lacked in our world was a larger perspective on reality. This can be the breakthrough we've always needed."

And so, with the grand optimism of true scientists, these three men began their journey into this cosmic unknown. Like Galileo, Da Vinci, Newton, Einstein, Bohr, Darwin, and the thousands before them, they held the notion that discovery was meant for all to enjoy, not just

the privileged few. Sadly, this was not the tenor of the modern age, and there were those in their time-trapped existence who would immediately put a stop to what they were doing. This was the time of world conglomerates who wanted to own patents on DNA and who used fear and terror as vehicles of profit.

At first, the cures for diseases were enough to make their new time travel device a world phenomenon. Dick Dolma traveled to worlds where there was no disease. He copied the formulae to cure cancer, diabetes, heart disease and hundreds of other infamous plagues that killed millions each year in their earthly time capsule. The elite people who were cured sang the praises of their work, and, for a brief period, Brainiac and the three scientists were the light of the world, shining their curative powers over the masses like a beacon of hope.

However, unlike the worlds where Dicky traveled, where the populace had become serene and accepting of their longevity, Dicky's world leaders soon realized the danger of spreading their knowledge without scrutiny for what it could bring to them. In the alternate worlds, Dicky saw populations that were limited by decree, and there was no fighting over who was in charge of the formulae. Science had become the touchstone for peace and the serene prosperity of natural values and technological wisdom in these worlds, but this curative knowledge was soon warped into a raging inferno of greed in Dicky's world.

The scientists in the Earth's world did not run things. Instead, the politicians, who were manipulated by the world Financiers, began their campaign to control the formulae. Using the world media and religions, they began propagandizing that if the cures were given to everyone, then terrorists and fanatical groups could gain the upper hand. Evil people who did not appreciate their health would run roughshod over everyone! Therefore, these same world leaders, who were destroying the Earth's ecosystems and waging wars in the name of all manner of vague slogans, became the controllers of the cures to the world's diseases. They charged millions of dollars to those who could afford a cure. Only those who could pay became disease-free. They ran their scheme the same way they had run the Wall Street ponzi scheme that shook the world into a recession and divided the world into haves and have-nots. They created complicated logarithms that were purchased by the wealthy elite in order to control the sale of cures. Only those elite who could enter the paying area were allowed to play.

Fishman, Appelbaum and Dolma were rendered "for security reasons" and transported by Air Force One to the huge presidential fortress built into the Appalachian Mountains near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Inside Raven Rock, as the otherwise unremarkable little mountain is called, laid a vast underground complex that was meant to replace the Pentagon--as well as shelter the president--in case of nuclear war.

Straddling the Maryland-Pennsylvania border in the Catoctin Mountains, Raven Rock was 12 miles from Gettysburg, 65 miles from Washington and about 6 miles from Camp David. Officially known as the Alternate Joint Communications Center, the "Underground Pentagon" was built in the early 1950s and has been waiting for Armageddon ever since. Now it housed the two scientists and the "little monk," who were seen as potential initiators of the "End of Times."

On a warm spring day, a day that would be made part of scientific history in the years to come, Brainiac came "online," so to speak, and the men who entered Raven Rock that day were to meet the three inventors of this device, who were now backed into a corner. They knew that if they could not get it out into the general public, their device would become eternally forgotten.

These fifteen men were the Financiers that played roulette with the world, and they will remain nameless. They were leaders of conglomerates from around the world, and they were there to listen to the scientists about a plan they had to allow them to reap even more monetary

rewards. Because, nobody outside of Raven Rock knew where the cures for the world's diseases were coming from, and this fact gave these men great power. They were there to tighten their hold on the Brainiac, and yet they knew that these three men held the key to their control.

"Dr. Fishman? Dr. Applebaum? Mr. Dolma?" The leader of the group, and tall and slender man with a balding head and wearing a gray Brooks Brothers suit, peered over his glasses and smiled. "We are here to listen. I assume you've prepared your prospectus?"

Lawrence stepped forward and lit up the gigantic telescreen on the wall in front of them. The image showed Dicky Dolma, seated in his chair, wired to the Brainac. "Mr. Dolma is a practiced Tibetan monk. He is one of the few who can maneuver in the alternate dimensions provided by our device. What we propose is an interactive portable apparatus, modeled after the Brainiac, which will allow the user to follow along with Dicky and experience what he experiences."

There were several agreeable grunts from the men. "Go on," said the leader.

"Dicky will be able to teach whomever you choose to travel into these parallel dimensions and learn about what they have to offer us. Once they have become proficient at meditation, we can allow them, one-by-one, to utilize our full-sized Braniac to travel in time and do your bidding."

A man in the back row spoke up. "How will we know when they are ready to use it?"

Dr. Applebaum answered, "We will screen them carefully. Unless they can perform at the level of Dicky's expertise, they will not be given the go-ahead. You must, however, provide us with the initiates you believe are not security risks. We must trust you on this."

The men assembled together in a circle and whispered amongst themselves for several minutes. They then turned toward the scientists, and the leader again spoke, "When can we begin?" he asked.

"Tomorrow morning," said Lawrence.

At first, the instruction seemed to be going along quite smoothly. The many students who learned from Dicky became quite enthusiastic about what they were doing, and they became as enlightened about existence as Dicky had become. The Financiers saw them as potential gurus who would lead new churches throughout the world, preaching the Revelation of the Alternate Universe. Just as private enterprise was beginning to transport the wealthy into outer space, the Brainiac would convey them into inner space where real wisdom was contained.

However, in their infinite greed, the world Financiers began to allow many of the rich who were not learning to use the Brainiac in the best interests of humanity. Gangsters and war lord potentates began to travel in time to reap the wares contained in the alternate criminal universes: Bionic android prostitutes, who catered to every sexual fantasy; drugs that brought consumers into new and tremendously addictive highs; gambling games that utilized Nature (Earthquake Destructo! Tsunami Surprise! Volcano Victory!). These new enterprises and many more came into existence shortly following their use of the Brainiac mainframe inside Raven Rock.

The portable Brainiac had become a household product, and the common people were now traveling in time inside their homes along with their guides at Raven Rock. Lawrence, Norman and Dicky were living outside Raven Rock, reaping the rewards of their teaching, but now the authorities were beginning to become aware that they had, indeed, opened a Pandora's Box.

"We have to do something before they come for us," said Lawrence, and both the old scientist and Dicky Dolma nodded their heads in agreement.

"Yes, but what? We have unleashed this device upon the unsuspecting world. How can we stop it?" Applebaum asked.

"If there are really alternate universes where values have been changed to fit the purpose of society, then there must be an ideal place where we can learn how to live in peace and devote ourselves to the perfection of life. This is something I have intuitively believed all my life, and now I know we must find it to stop this chaos!" Lawrence stood up and raised his fist into the air. "We'll tell the Financiers that we are going to find them the most profitable Holy Grail they can imagine."

"Eternal life?" said Dicky.

"Correct," said Lawrence. "However, what I will be looking for will be the world where people can learn to live together in a common bond of human and ecological interest."

Norman frowned. "If you think there is chaos and greed in our world right now, what do you suppose will happen when people really try to live in peace? These wealthy elite will never allow it."

Dicky Dolma sighed deeply. "Alas, Norman's right. Why do you think I entered the Buddhist monastery? We must each find our own way to inner peace."

Lawrence would not be dissuaded. "I disagree. Without a goal, without hope, the human race might as well not even exist. I intend to give them that purpose!"

So it was that Lawrence Fishman communicated with the authorities that he wanted to get on the Brainiac mainframe one more time to find an alternate universe where humans live forever. He would then bring their secret back so that the Financiers could use it to stop the chaotic destruction.

"Yes!" the Financiers shouted. "With eternal life, we can create a world where we will keep the peace forever!"

Lawrence and his two compatriots were whisked by jet aircraft to Raven Rock.

Dicky Dolma had taught Lawrence everything he needed to know to travel by Brainiac, so the minute the power was turned on, Lawrence was in control. The immediate floating sensation took over his mind, and he flew in and out of the mandala's doors as if he had been there many times before. Each new universe gave him astounding views and landscapes of alternate reality. However, he knew the only way he could enter the place he needed to be was through intuition and not scientific logic. This was the way Dicky had discovered the worlds where diseases were cured. He had simply meditated upon health and the common welfare of humanity, and he was immediately pulled inside a worm hole that showed him the way. It was almost too easy. All these millennia, mankind had fought, conquered, destroyed and held each other prisoner, all in the name of some new nation or spiritual cause, and the result would always come to nothing. The struggle simply continued, throughout the ages, until the Earth, it seemed, was ready to implode with greed, corruption, war and revolt.

As Lawrence focused his entire being on finding peace and harmony, he felt his body float into a universe where a voice could be heard calling out over the reality and the lands below. It was the literal voice of God! Whereas many scriptures had said that God was the word, this alternate universe demonstrated this in actuality. The people of this world heard God's word directly, and this is what Lawrence and the people below heard:

"Hiding is the hidden purpose of creation.

Bury your seed and wait.

After you die, all the thoughts you had will throng around like children.

The heart is the secret inside the secret.

Call the secret *language* and never be sure what you conceal.

It's unsure people who get the blessing.

Climbing jasmine, opening rose, nightingale song, these are inside the chill November wind. They are its secret.

How did you discover mine? Your laugh. Only the soul knows what love is. This moment in time and space is an eggshell with an embryo crumpled inside, soaked in spirit-yolk, under the wing of grace, until it breaks free of mind to become the song of birds and their breathing."

The world he floated inside was indeed a land of friendship, love and peace. All of the humans were assisting each other to live better lives. Building homes, traveling along miraculous roads where bodies of humans raced without mechanical propulsion, singing festivals, comedic plays and orchestras of melodies that floated up to him like tantalizing dreams, Lawrence took in this land of devotion and knew he had discovered the center of the Cosmos, from which radiated all the myriad worlds and universes attempting, in their own ways, to discover this central purpose.

The power of this nucleus world was phenomenal. Lawrence knew that his entire purpose for living was to find a way to get there. Now that he had uncovered it, he did not want to leave. However, he knew his friends on Earth needed him and what he could show them, so he did leave but not without a deep feeling of regret and longing. He wanted to dwell in this world, bathe in its pleasant vibrations of love and respect for life. He wanted to inoculate himself against all the sin and pain he knew existed back on the earthly plane of existence. However, this core of human purpose would be the way for him to finally connect with his fellows and help them transcend suffering once and for all.

When he came back, Lawrence told the Financiers that he had not yet discovered the secret to eternal life, but he would soon return again. He knew where it was, as he had glimpsed it from afar. There was something more he needed to learn from the Tibetan monks before he returned. Thus, the leaders allowed him to travel with Dicky Dolma back to Dharamsala, India, to learn the meditation technique required to enter the ultimate mandala reality.

Of course, they were not traveling to see the Dalai Lama in order to learn a new technique. They were headed there to set-up the communication center for the Nucleus Project. This would be a combination Internet and Brainiac spiritual battle ground to fight the evil powers of greed that wanted to keep control on Earth.

The Dalai Lama immediately agreed to allow Lawrence, Norman and Dicky to use his facilities to communicate with the world. He told them he had been following their exploits and had meditated upon their problem.

"I have seen this nuclear world you speak about," said His Ocean of Wisdom, smiling, wearing his golden, saffron robes. "This is the central place, the paradise of all known religions. We have been trying to teach people about it for all these thousands of years, but there are always the negative forces that try to keep us from doing this. Just as I was run out of my native country, we who seek the inner Truth are today searching for your world of peace and love."

Lawrence and Dicky created the web site where they extolled the reality of the Nucleus universe, telling the people of the world, in all languages, they could visit by journeying to Dharamsala. They also built a new Brainiac, specifically designed to travel to their new paradise, and the first pilgrims began their crossing shortly thereafter.

Unlike the Financiers, whose only screening device was wealth, the Buddhist monastery attracted those who had the inner spiritual need to find peace. At first, they trickled into the

mountain community as tourists, visiting the Dalai Lama's compound to learn how to find this inner Paradise. When Lawrence and his team determined they were spiritually fit to travel on Brainiac, they allowed them to go. After they returned, these spiritual travelers had the same rejuvenated look of serenity and joy that Lawrence and his cohorts had experienced, and they became immediate converts to the cause.

As the word got out that there was an actual place where one could observe and learn how to live in peace and love, it became a centerpiece for all the world's religions. It was non-denominational, and even Humanists and philanthropists made their pilgrimage to travel on Brainiac to this nuclear universe. With each visit, they learned how easy it was to experience cooperation and learn from the teachings of the great gurus of history, who spoke out of the clouds to them. It had all been there before, and it only took one visit to the tangible shores of its fruition for them to become converts to the most powerful force on Earth: love.

However, since these converts did become direct and immediate threats to the status quo on Earth, they soon were labeled covert terrorists, according to the powers that still ruled, with iron fists of money and greed, all over the world's nations.

And, even though the Dalai Lama told them they could continue their work, perhaps more clandestinely, they knew it would be impossible to stop the eventual onslaught of military might that would come at them in Dharamsala. Lawrence also knew that the Brainiac must be destroyed to prevent the total annihilation of their cause.

"Our paradise has been seen and experienced by thousands of converts," said Lawrence, as he composed the last message that he would put up on the web site and email to the millions of followers all over the world. "They will still teach its reality, and its existence will inspire many others in the years to come."

The final message was brief and to the point:

"The center world exists, waiting in eternal bliss and living in perfect harmony with Nature and all human endeavors. The Brainiac is only a machine, a mechanical and electrical device that points you to the center. With or without it, it means the same. Just as religion is only a finger pointing toward God, so does science merely show the way. We hope you keep fighting the good fight and that you find your own peace someday."

It is said that when Brainiac was destroyed, the lights around the world dimmed for several hours, allowing everyone to wonder about the truth of its purpose. Like most religious experiences, Brainiac has been warped by non-believers into a myth of ghastly proportions. Some said it was a gimmick by the Dalai Lama to get more money. "He shows porno to the people. He rips them off." They could not believe that science had proved the existence of an inner world, an alternate reality, where all other life forms emanated outward, in a spiritual "Big Bang" to create the endless Cosmos of possibilities.

However, as Lawrence Fishman, Norman Applebaum and Dicky Dolman worked at their daily activities, they understood why they had become brief messengers of this inner wisdom. The story of the Brainiac would never totally disappear, and perhaps, one day in the future, some other scientist would put together the device to show the way to a more spiritually evolved humanity. Or, as Dicky Dolman believed, as he watched the calm and reverential smile of the Dalai Lama, his master, the inner peace would overcome them from within, and there would never be a need to travel at all.

# Entropy

At first, I had this immediate feeling that my body was imploding. As a particle physicist, I am aware of the entropic characteristics that all matter possesses. It is the reality that all atheists like me has to face. No matter how assiduously we work to create a sensually provocative habitat, time will take its toll on our physical appearance and, indeed, on our ability to appreciate life itself. Thank goodness, we also have ways of sparking energy into our bodies in order to combat the inevitable fact of entropy. As a sixty-eight-year-old male college professor, I was not going to fall victim to entropy and its all-consuming death. Instead, as my wife, who is a psychotherapist for persons suffering from eating disorders likes to say, "You have to feed the fire to stay human."

We have a lovely vacation villa in New Mexico called "La Casa de Mañana." My wife, Geraldine, and I like to use it in the winter, when the snows hit upper Manhattan. Geraldine appreciates the fact that we are not getting any younger, and that gravity has taken hold on her body as well. Therefore, she knows about my little hobby, and, in fact, she was very supportive when I brought the idea to her to discuss over wine and Gouda, just before we left for New Mexico.

Geraldine is a tall woman, and she wears her clothes stylishly. She has kept her figure, and she is proud to be an excellent example to her patients, who are quite the opposite, in many cases, having succumbed to the American "junk food monster," as Geri likes to call it. Geri and I met in college; she was in grad school at NYU, as was I, and we hit it off almost immediately. We were both Libertarians, politically, and we were enamored of the works of Ayn Rand and Ron Paul. Most of all, we understood the purpose for existence: to maximize pleasure and to minimize pain. Indeed, the most advanced societies in the world understood this, and their daily activities reflected the credo of hedonism that we subscribed to.

Many of our friends and relatives often ask us about how we stay so optimistically young in our attitudes and in our activities. The answer is at the heart of Libertarian values. We place our own happiness before any that the political or governmental construct can fashion. Therefore, when I explained how my hobby could be expanded into a more developed enterprise on the Internet, Geri was quite enthusiastic. After all, she also would often "recharge her batteries," as she liked to call it. We were constantly looking for new ways to enhance our enjoyment of sensual pleasures, and my idea was certainly doing that.

"You remember how difficult it was to find an escort service in New Mexico?" I asked Geri, toking on our large, Egyptian water pipe. I have a card for medicinal marijuana because of my back pain. I like to refresh my supply of THC with the cool Aquafina that I keep inside the hookah. The psychoactive hallucinogen also assists me in making creative leaps of insight when I'm planning a computer project. My mind is very linear when I don't smoke marijuana. The drug, as it has always done, allows me to make new connections in non-linear ways.

"Yes, you were quite perturbed by all the calling you had to do," Geri said, placing her index finger on my nose and smiling at me. Her captivatingly aquamarine eyes glistened in the candlelight like beacons of future passion.

"I think I've found a solution to all the problems we've had procuring a suitable escort. I've kept the email addresses of the business people we've hired and enjoyed in the past, and I recently approached them with my idea. They are all quite agreeable, and we have thus determined to open our new service in beta form beginning next week."

"Service? You're not going to rent that gorgeous body of yours, are you?" Geri giggled.

"Of course not! I am simply going to use the software program I use at school in order to organize and establish a structured and profitable escort service." I dragged on the pipe and blew smoke rings. I always picture myself as the caterpillar sitting on the giant psychedelic mushroom in *Alice in Wonderland*. Whoooo are yoooooo?

"How will it work? It sounds very interesting, but the devil is always in the details, as you like to point out to me," said Geri.

"First off, the interface will be plain and peaceful. One banner image will show the tranquil desert and shadowy mountains of New Mexico. There will be referrals from the girls who get prospective clients off their own web sites, and we will also get prospects that create an account on the main web site I will create. There will be three levels of participation. The first level will place the client on probation. This allows the client access to one escort for one appointment. This is where my genius comes into play."

"Oh, I knew there would be some of *that*," Geri said.

"The girl will email me with the details of the first appointment. What did the client ask for? How much did he or she pay? How did he or she behave? If the client performs admirably, then he or she can move into the next category of participation, which is verified status. This will reassure *my* customers, the providers of the escort services, that these verified clients have passed the most important hurdle. Then, after the client has successfully participated in five such rendezvous, he or she will be moved up into the top category on my organizational structure, sponsorship. Sponsorship will allow a client to choose amongst the variety of available escorts, and it will also permit them to rate each escort. These ratings will be made available to sponsors only. In addition, I will also visit these top-rated escorts in order to provide a quality check on their services. This last gambit will also give me a boost of energy to make our love life that much more satisfactory, my darling."

I moved toward Geri, and she opened her arms to me. We kissed passionately, and our bodies soon became one. "Howard!" she cried, in our usual pantomime of our favorite literary characters from our favorite novel, *The Fountainhead*, by Ayn Rand. "Dominique!" I answered, pulling her on top of my rising skyscraper.

My new hobby was quite successful until I began receiving emails from someone who called him or herself "lonewolf13." I knew this individual was going to be trouble when the salutation in the email began, "Dear Needle-dick the Bug Fucker," and continued with a rash of argumentative vindictiveness that challenged not only my manhood but also the core of my philosophical being. It was as if this person was spawned from the depths of Soviet-era Communism and had become my adversarial doppelgänger. Not only did he or she mock my Libertarian principles, but the fabric of my very being was also being refuted:

*what gives u the right to judge how somebuddy fucks, u dum kunt? u fucking ad for erecktail disfuction! the people should choose on there own. they dont need no fony professer to judge for them.*

As I learned later, this was but a warning shot across the bow of my ship. Despite the obviously illiterate emails, this person was a true hacker and spy with computer skills which far surpassed my own.

The real war began between us following an online debate that started on the discussion board created for sponsor-level participants. Lonewolf13 must have hacked into the board and read the debate, because he or she knew exactly what was said and who said it.

The argument began over legalization of drugs and prostitution. We were all in basic agreement that by making victimless crimes like these legal, society could reap the benefits in terms of lower disease rates, fewer crimes by addicts, and raising the level of clientele quality.

That's when the hacker piped up. He told us we were full of excrement and that it was a modern fact that creativity in video games, music and in movies did more than any drug in the world could do for one's imagination, and that sexually transmitted diseases have developed a resistance to known treatments. Also, profit should remain in the hands of the independent business entrepreneur.

*i thot thats what u were all into u libertines! Free enterprise and all that shit.*

I told this person if he were so smart, then he should show us what he meant by using specific examples. He said he would and that I should meet him at an undisclosed location. He was going to send me an encrypted email with the address, and I should meet him there the next day.

* * *

The encrypted address he gave me was 1526 South Adobe Falls Road in Santa Fe, which turned out to be an abandoned warehouse. It looked like a rat-infested hovel out of an old Dickens novel, and I was expecting some horrendous display of foreign nationals shivering in a dark room, huddled under the watchful eye of gangster pimps.

Instead, the most beautiful woman I have ever seen padded her barefoot way into the dark room, a brilliant light from the ceiling following her every step. She wore a flowing white tunic, obviously Grecian, and her blonde hair was crowned with a halo of golden roses; she had a long sash around her waist made of spun gold. With each step, her alabaster legs were unveiled, and my eyes followed these legs up her body, to her roundly firm breasts, and they finally stopped at her face. There was also a misty glow that smelled of jasmine and roses, and I could hear the sound of water gurgling over rocks.

The stimulation from gazing at her body became immediately irrelevant when I looked into her face. This was the only woman I have ever seen whose face gave me an erection. Her eyes were ocean blue, and her nose was aquiline above pouty, swollen pink lips. The dimples on either side of her mouth caused a firestorm of desire inside me that made me want to leap at her from the shadows like an aroused leopard.

"I am so glad you could visit us, Dr. Spence. We have so much to see and discuss and not much time to do it in," the gorgeous creature said, clasping my hands. Her flesh was warm, and I felt like I could walk with her forever as she led me down the corridor to a locked room. However, I was surprised that this woman had met me and not lonewolf13, and I told her as much.

"Oh, Sebastian is our computer technician. He is constantly prowling about looking for mischief. You must not judge a book by its cover. Sebastian may seem a bit crude, but his heart is in the right place. He is entirely with us and with our overall philosophy," she smiled, and those dimples cast a spell over me. It was as difficult to argue with her as it would be to argue with Sophia Loren or Marilyn Monroe.

As the door opened, an intercom voice came on to explain what I was seeing. What I was actually seeing was a room filled with hundreds of devices suspended from the ceiling, attached to the walls and coming up from the floor. There were fountains, dildos, leather pants and vests, whips, chains, flowers, perfumes, mirrors, vibrators, and lotions. The voice-over was clear, precise and informational. It was as if I were touring an exhibit in some museum or art compilation.

*Aphrodite's Pleasure Palace gives the client choice. As the foundation of any democratic system, we want our customers to have their sexual fantasy needs met no matter how extravagant or seemingly perverse they might appear to the society at large. Aristotle believed that entertainment must provide catharsis; that is, the best way to prevent rape, violence and sexual aberrations in the social arena, is to allow the public to experience these events artistically, in our rooms.*

What happened next was so shocking to my system that I still find it difficult putting the words down. Another woman, almost as beautiful as my hostess, came into the room from a side door, followed by a big beefy man dressed in black, his head covered by a hood. At first, he ordered the woman to undress, and she complied, dropping her kimono to the floor to reveal a shapely form, with firm, uplifted breasts and a black patch of pubis. The man walked over to her and began slapping her—first in the face, gently, and then on her thighs and buttocks. Her white skin began to take on a reddish hue, and her breathing came in quick gasps. As he began to strike her more violently, her nipples became engorged and she let out squeals of pain. But then, the big ape picked one of the large bull whips off the wall and began thrashing her repeatedly about the shoulders, breasts, legs and ass. Large, bloody welts formed, and she finally fell to the floor.

"Make him stop!" I shouted, becoming enraged.

However, he did not stop. In fact, he strapped on a gigantic dildo and walked over to her supine body until he stood directly above her head. I'll never forget the look of ultimate terror on her face as this beast pushed that 20-inch tumescent flange into her mouth and crushed it into the back of her skull. She gagged, she writhed on the floor like a snake, and when she finally succumbed, her bladder and bowels released, sending a putrid odor wafting all around the room. That's when I passed out, I guess, and was awakened inside a room that contained a giant water fountain, classical music that streamed throughout, and my hostess was standing over me with that same giant dildo strapped to her waist.

I screamed bloody murder, of course, but she just laughed and unfastened the dildo so that it fell to the floor with a plop.

"What in the hell just happened in there?" I asked, rising up on my elbows in the turquoise chase lounge to stare into those blue eyes.

"Wasn't it realistic?" she asked. "She was an example of our latest model, the Z50-TX. Many of our members choose that model because they have life-like internal organs, a respiratory system, as well as the demonstrated evacuation and blood stream flow."

"Are you telling me that woman was not real?" I asked.

"Of course not! This was what we brought you over to see. We supply the latest robot technology available. Unless our clients can experience every fantasy they may have, our purposes will not be fulfilled. With every Z50-TX that is used, one real woman out there on the streets of the world will be saved. That's the way we look at it. Our clients believe they are getting real women, yet, as you have seen, we supply them with our robotic women who appear to be tortured, but they are simply performing their programmed activities."

As she said this, the same woman from the torture room walked into our grotto. She was smiling, and there were no physical marks, bruises or scratches anywhere to be seen on her lusciously naked form.

"Where are you people located? I have done research into sex robots for my own purposes, and I have found no such realistic device out there. The most they had was a robotic rubber version not much better than the inflatable Blowjob Bettys that are found in your

neighborhood sex shop. I'm not saying I agree with your ideas about purging emotions and all that Greek hoopla, but you really do have a convincing product! Where can I get one?"

"I am glad you asked, Dr. Spence. We have been monitoring your little enterprise, and we would like to extend an offer to you. We need some sales reps out there in the public who can best represent our interests. Because we only supply our services after a thorough screening and personal invitation, we need to have professionals we can trust exhibiting what we have to offer. We believe you could be one such professional."

"Listen. I was just thinking about my personal enjoyment. What do I have to do to get one of these ladies in my own house?"

"Of course, you can avail yourself of her beauty, whenever you wish, but we need to introduce our services to a wider and more sophisticated audience and clientele. Can you help us?" She smiled, and those dimples won me over.

What Aphrodite wanted was for me introduce Venus (the name I gave her) to my colleagues in the academic world. I supposed she was charging quite a bit of money to partake in these sexual antics, and I was hoping that if I could be a good sales rep, perhaps she would include me in the profit she was undoubtedly making.

As Geri and I played with our new toy in bed, we examined her body from head to foot. Not only was she perfectly developed, with life-like skin, motion and breathing, she was also a wonderful conversationalist. We tried out our entire repartee on her: science, humanities, current events and popular culture. She was informed in every category. We surmised that the computer chip implant she had received was at least as proactive as the best mainframe the Pentagon had to offer.

The sex was also amazing. Geri exhausted herself in the intricate cunnilingus this robot could exhibit, and I wondered at the special suction she could provide as that beautiful head went down on me. Actually, it became a bit disconcerting after weeks went by. We knew she was a robot, and, therefore, we also knew what we were experiencing was not quite true. Yes, Venus did cater to our every sexual fantasy, and yet, somehow, it did not seem to hold the same excitement for us. We discussed this fact at length one night, and we came to the conclusion that what we missed was the negotiations or "power trip" you get when you deal with a human being. With Venus, there was no argument or negotiating for services. She was programmed to fulfill our every desire, and we could not enjoy the process of overcoming resistance that had always been part of our dealings with human escort services.

"For example," I said, pointing at Venus as she cleaned up our room, "on my web site, my sponsors can negotiate and grade the escorts they meet, and the result is not always perfect, but it is always very human. My girls tell me about clients who are nasty and mean or about a pimp who beats them. Venus here would never go against her human programming, now would she? Now would you, Venus?"

The brunette, perpetually 21, forever beautiful and at our service, turned toward my voice, and she smiled. "Of course not, Dr. Spence!" she laughed. "You are my reason for living. Without you, I cannot experience this world. I cannot smell the flowers or touch a baby's face. You are my entrance into a living paradise."

And thus, I began introducing Venus to my cohorts, explaining to them that she was part of a unique escort service that could give them the most thrilling experience imaginable. Stan Riley in Biology was the first to use her, and then Sid Feinberg in Comparative Literature. They both were so enthusiastic that they spread the word to others in their coterie, and soon, most of the school's faculty, both male and female, had spent the night with my Venus. It was like a

virus was overtaking a computer system. The word of her sexual prowess spread outside our college and onto the web. As a result, Aphrodite's Pleasure Palace was soon getting the respected people they could invite for more specialized services at private hotels and resorts around the world.

* * *

After two years, the world as we knew it had ceased to exist. My little hobby in New Mexico was shut down by the FBI; I was arrested as I was tweaking the site inside a Santa Fe Starbuck's. I imagine every human escort service in the world is now out of business. As most members of the Washington D. C. elite had already been privately seduced by Aphrodite's Pleasure Palace (APP) it was legalized in a special congressional bill that made a point of stating that "because the sensual experience provided by APP is virtual, using advanced robotic technology, it can therefore be classified as a realistic computerized simulation and not as prostitution."

After I was bailed out by the lawyers at Aphrodite's, I was able to return to my academic duties. Yes, APP is a multinational corporation, but nobody knows where their corporate offices are officially located. The legal paperwork says the Cayman Islands, but there is only a post office box there.

Our college has now become an entirely online curriculum, to save money, and most of the professors who present their content include some variety of sensory exhilaration from Aphrodite's Pleasure Palace in order to draw students to their classes and earn a little rebate. Like wild fire, social media has spread the word about the sensuously stimulating lifestyle provided by APP, and the result has been a cataclysmic shift in entertainment and life on this planet.

Geri and I often sit around with fellow academics and discuss what has caused this, and what might be the end result, and often, because of too much wine, hashish or other psychedelic drug, our discussions will go a bit wild. For example, one scientist will suggest that APP could be run by North Korea or perhaps even by some advanced alien civilization grooming us for slave labor in the future. He will point out that just like the Aphrodite in Greek myth the gods of war seem to have been taken in most by the sexual tentacles of the robots at APP. Every country protects the hotels and resorts sponsored by APP, and violence has become almost unheard of. The men at arms seem to have lost their lust for conflict, and it is as if we *were* being groomed for alien colonization. There was too much peace, too much tranquility.

Geri and I get a monthly check in the mail that is double what we make as a professor and therapist. Yes, we still have Venus, and she still services us, as long as I keep introducing her to new faculty, who in turn will come under the umbrella-like charms of APP.

We often stare at Venus as she sits, alive and breathing, in the corner of our living room. She has no need to sleep; she has no entropic disaster waiting inside her body, as we do. Her smile is like a Buddha, who is contemplating the infinity of technology without humanity. Is this what's in our future? Is it the human race that is being replaced by perfect robotics? Geri and I laugh, however, and toast our glasses to her. As owners and shareholders in this enterprise, are we not like the living personifications of Howard and Dominique? Until the aliens land to take over the enterprise of America or the totalitarian government sends out its storm troops to put us all into concentration camps, we shall enjoy each and every minute of this paradise on Earth.

Just as I am thinking this, Venus laughs, as if she can also read my mind, and she winks at me. Is it the drugs I took a minute ago, back in the bedroom or do I see her skin begin to peel back to reveal the soulless creature within? Erik Satie plays in the background, and I can feel the

entropy inside me wriggling its way into my brain. The creature before me is my Helen of Troy, or perhaps she is my Trojan horse, and yours is waiting, too, if you are prepared to sell your own psyche to her and to her kind. Geri is no comfort to me; the world cannot soothe me; I can only surrender to the eternal moment and to the controlled lust and desire enveloping me as I slowly, second by abandoned infernal second, die to her seductive charms.

# Freedum

I got the Freedum delivery job through my broinlaw, Sid Edelstein. He works at "It's a Mall World" over by the river. After the fortyyearsofgreen, the water has become drinkable again, and we can even drink it sometimes, when we know for sure it's been filtered by a safe filtration company. Sid, my broinlaw, says his job isn't much better than mine. Instead of going podtopod, the way I deliver Freedum, his delivery method gives them their choices on different levels of the mall. His customers are mobile. They work for the gubment and are kept busy going around the country getting votes, so their legs are still functional.

On the other hand (or leg), my customers are the majority of our country's working stiffs: the Freedum Flyers. These are the folks who run most of everything in our society. They control all the computerized Freedum such as Instabanks, Instashops, Instagames, Instasports, InstaTV, Instamovies, Instablogs, Instasex, Instamarriage, Instadivorce, Instamortuary, and the hundreds of thousands other "Insta" web sites. This makes up our World Freedum Network. I serve the 90 percent of the working stiffs who run this online virtual world.

In our post-green world, the only room we have for mobile humanity is on the tiny Paths of Nature that weave through the millions of pods where the Freedum Flyers work, keeping our social fabric running (and of course inside Mall Worlds as well). We lost most of our space for moving around long ago. The majority of the elders cannot even remember what it was like before we became a nation of Freedum.

Some of the oldest of the mobile ones tell crazy stories on late-night talk shows about places called "National Parks" where they say they could leave the cities to visit Nature that was being held captive inside huge enclosures called "parks." They had trees growing, wild animals frolicking, waterfalls falling over mountains, and places where one could actually sit out in the middle of all that green and cook over an open fire! A fire in the middle of trees, can you believe it? We know all about the fires that stormed the path of destruction that led to our fortyyearsofgreen, just as we know about the flooding of the oceans caused by Global Warming that led to our fiftyyearsofwars. Our wars were fought over the rest of the natural resources left after the floods, and I guess back then our population was down to a reasonable size, but after the wars, we started going at it again, and our numbers soon increased until we were back up to our usual overflowing and suffocating size. That's why we needed Freedum.

I guess I like my job. If I didn't do it, then these Freedum Flyers of mine would have no life at all. As I drive down the paths between pods, I try to focus on the music streaming inside my Freedum Flyer Greenmobile, but sometimes I can't, and I look outside to see all the deliveries being made across this great land of ours. All of our fish are now farmed, all of our other complex protein was long ago converted to cloned Instamammals, and all of the other vegetation is also bio-engineered and delivered by podmobiles to the pods housing our Freedum Flyer workforce. The mobile gubment workers are the only ones who are allowed to go "shopping" in the Mall Worlds. They can also, of course, get deliveries made to their gubment pods, but that is considered a low-class thing to do for a mobile person. The pods are all around me as I drive down the path to make deliveries. My Freedom Flyer is over two blocks long, and when I arrive at a pod, it swivels into a vertical tower, wherein my assortment of "choice modules" are raised to the level of the Freedum Flyer worker bubbles, and the busy little bees can then partake of the only enjoyment they ever have in their hectic lives.

What do they get to choose from? Why, they choose from the same variety of Instant Freedum that they are in charge of on their computerized network! Isn't it beautiful? The logic

of it all? It's a giant feedback loop. There is no need for advertising because we deliver the choices directly to the consumer. And, of course, the consumers work at providing those same choices to the rest of the world. It is a perfectly programmed circle of capitalism at its finest. The corporate gubment reaps the benefit, of course, and this often makes me a bit sad. I wonder what those mobile gubment workers do with *their* profits? Sometimes, I even speculate if they deserve their profits, but even thinking such subversive thoughts can get one arrested and sent to one of the thousands of Terrorist Detainee Pods.

However, today is my Freedum Flyer friend's birthday, and I am going to propose something to him in the way of a celebratory act. My friend's name is Caleb. Freedum Flyers are not allowed a surname, as they are considered part of the working infrastructure of the Corporate Gubment and not really in its corps of leadership. I, however, the dissident that I am, believe the Freedum Flyers and other working stiffs deserve better treatment. That's why I am doing this. My friend Caleb and I are going to perform a celebratory trick on the gubment mobile employees that will teach them a lesson.

Here it is, pod number 6855273-C-36657. As I open it, I can see my friend still at work, typing frantically on his keyboard, his face a picture of stern concentration, his tiny, useless legs dangling over his seat like the *tzitzit on my talit prayer shawl.* Yes, I am a Jew. My name is Jacob Weisberg, and I am going to cause a ruckus in the world of the gubment. I will not be alone in this effort, as we Jews insinuate ourselves throughout society, keeping a record of our activities, and we are obligated by our religion to constantly work for "Justice." The treatment of the Freedum Flyers like my friend, Caleb, is not just.

"Caleb, my friend! Happy birthday! Stop working for a moment, will you? I have a proposition to make."

My friend's huge, bald head rises up from the keyboard, like a moon over Jupiter, and I can see his reflecting, human eyes of green-blue staring back at me. He is intelligent, inquisitive, with a great sense of humor. That's why I am doing this. I know his kind must get some respect in this world order, or they will surely eventually die, and I will not be part of their destruction!

"Jacup Wiseburp! How the hell are ya?" Caleb waves at me, weakly, as his hands are conditioned, through many thousands of repetitive hours, to type only at a keyboard and not to wave in the air at a friend.

"Listen, Caleb, I have a plan that I've been working on for many months now, and it's going to make the Gubment pay attention to your plight as a Freedum Flyer."

"Here we go again. Jacob, buddy, it's all good. I know you Jews invented guilt, but we InstaCatholics perfected it. We Flyboys look at our job as just another cross for Jesus, that's all. Don't be so sad. It ain't all bad, you know. We get a week in the Instasex game rooms with our choice of thousands of celebrity women—hooray!"

"That's not *real* human contact, Caleb. It's a programmed hologram that tricks your body into secreting its holy juices in a masturbatory sin! It's worse than Onanism. It just feeds into your narcissistic tendencies. Don't you want to run free out in the world? Don't you need to touch another imperfect human and love her as a truly married person and not in one of these fabricated Instamarriages that are just virtual lies?"

"Jake, you don't really *get* it, do you? Our virtual world gives us more Freedum than the real world! That's its beauty. Before the Instaworld we had fewer choices, and we were killing each other over the limited natural resources. Now we all live in harmony in the world, we all get fed our fill every day, and we all get billions of different choices to make to bring joy into

our personal lives. I'm glad to be growing older in this world. Why can't you just relax and enjoy it too?"

"Look down at your legs, friend," I told him, making a last effort to break through his wall of denial. "You can't walk. You can't visit any other place but inside your own head. They *made* you this way! And they don't care, either, when your pods get destroyed by earthquakes or fires. It's not broadcast over the Freedum Network, but I've seen the results. Thousands of your friends and their bald heads and spindly legs are crushed like maggots inside a loaf of bread. Get wise, Caleb! Don't be a martyr for Corporate Gubment."

"All right, Jacob. Let's just assume for a moment that you can show me the world you propose is better. What is this plan of yours? How do we show the gubment up?"

"Now you're talking!" I pulled out the walker that my broinlaw, Sid, created for Freedum Flyers to become mobile. It is a solar and biofuel-powered hover-craft that could propel a small Flyer anywhere he or she wanted to go. It could maneuver the stubby body at up to ten miles an hour, and it could fit snuggly on the thighs of the Flyer so he wouldn't tip over. "I've had thousands of these made for us. We're going to organize a mass demonstration of Freedum Flyers, and we're all going to march on Corporate Gubment offices. But first, my friend, I am going to take you with me so you can see how our leaders are living at your expense!"

* * *

On his thirty-fourth birthday, I took Caleb to see what was going on inside a Gubment pod on the outskirts of our city. I had, one year earlier, visited their domicile through a servants' entrance that snaked through the rows of buildings that served as their living quarters. I, of course, was not an authorized servant, but another of my broinlaws, Mel Appel was, and he was able to get the correct chip implanted in my arm to get me into the buildings as a delivery person. So, on this day, I took my little friend, Caleb, for his first look at how "the other half" lived.

Actually, like most of what humanity created (and as our King David once pointed out much earlier), it was nothing new. In fact, as my grandfather Sol, who keeps the ancient collection of history books told me, "That's just like the ancient Romans, Jacob. They live like the Romans once did."

The first building I showed Caleb was one where the Gubment employees ate and enjoyed themselves as a group. The walls were covered with mirrors so they could see themselves as they stuffed their mouths with every imaginable food and drink. They sat in a wide circle, slobbering, spitting, splattering and swatting each other with the juices from chickens, turkeys, pigs, cattle, fish, fruits, wines, liquors, and many other consumables we had never even seen before. Also, against the wall, were a row of tubs, where the Gubment imbibers threw-up when they were full so they could then engorge themselves some more. And, as they partook of this ungodly feast, in total nudity, I might add, dozens of dancing women pirouetted across the front of the assembly, also sans clothing, in a disgustingly sexual equivalent of the gluttonous display. The pale white women were kissing, fingering, and flopping themselves against each other, moaning and groaning like ghosts from Hell. As we gazed upon them from the delivery chute, I turned to my friend Caleb and muttered, "Would you like some Sodom on your Gomorrah?"

"Revolting!" he said.

"Don't worry, pal, I've got it all on video," I said.

Although I showed Caleb many more buildings that day, buildings where the Gubment mobile employees strolled in natural splendor inside hermetically sealed-off arboretums and

aviaries, and where they relaxed in furnished comfort inside giant, four-poster beds; frolicked in heated pools; sweated inside luxurious saunas; commingled in romantic showers and kissed each other inside fragrant gardens; we just watched them in complete silence, and I could hear Caleb's stomach begin to growl in a sort of primeval protest.

"Let's go back," I told him, and we left the Gubment employees inside their world of real, physical delight.

* * *

All my Jewish friends wore their blue talit shawls when they delivered the thousands of Freedum Flyer hover-craft to their new owners. We were making a religious as well as a political statement. I must admit, when I saw the rows upon rows of Freedum Flyers queuing up on the Nature Path that led to the Corporate Gubment headquarters across the river, it was quite a moving sight. I had my evidence inside my sealed container. They were digital videos of the insides of the Gubment buildings where the truth of their exorbitant lifestyle could be shown for the entire world to see. I also had many more copies made, and my friends in Freedum pods around the country were ready to stream them over the network if our demands were not met.

My grandfather, Sol, told me the story of Jacob, in our scriptures, and he said that my namesake had to wrestle with an angel in order to gain a spiritual blessing for his people. He became the spirit of Israel and he defeated the material Rome. That's what I was now doing, or so I believed, and as we rolled down the Nature Path, I could see the thousands of bobbing, bald heads of my Catholic brothers, and the ruffling blue talits of my Jewish brethren, and my heart was at peace.

When I showed the videos to the President of the Corporate Gubment, he was honestly surprised at what he saw. He did not realize that profits were being used in this way, and he immediately agreed to our demands. What were they? They were actually pretty simple. I wanted the Freedum Flyers to be able to exercise and to marry each other in real marriages, and to be able to grow real legs and take real walks in actual gardens and other places built for their public enjoyment. I wanted us to have access to Nature again. Perhaps a public nature reserve, such as the National Park, could be again preserved for us? I told him our bodies were crying out for spiritual release, and our only enjoyment on earth could come from friends, from family and from the warm hugs of their bodies. Never again should we be shut inside secluded pods to work until our bodies became frail and disfigured. "Our bodies," I told him, "are temples of the Creator. We, in fact, are created in His own image."

I guess it was this last statement that really got to the president. I saw tears come to his eyes, and he gave the orders that would result in our freedom. Yes, we have reverted back to the ancient spelling of the word. Some Gubment advertising man had created "Freedum" because he thought it was an ingenious way to show their superiority over the "dumb" workers.

As I watch my friend Caleb's legs begin to grow stronger, with each passing day, his head also seems to be getting smaller; perhaps it is the special hormones and medical care from the Gubment that is causing his hair to grow out and his smile to become authentic. I don't know. I just know that I enjoy taking him out for walks inside the new "Freedom Garden" in his neighborhood, where we exchange jokes about the Gubment employees, who all were terminated from their jobs, or, in some cases, as with those who were the planners behind the theft of the money, were thrown inside a Terrorist Detainee Center to live out their lives in the shadows of miserable anguish.

The lesson we learned from this experience was that freedom is not choice. Freedom is the leisure to walk, to assemble, to sing, and to dance, and to do all the other physical things that

our souls need to join with our bodies. For, after all, our spirit is wed to our body, and whenever cruelty or injustice tries to separate them, my people, and any people who understand, will always rise up to fight the injustice.

# The Mutant Gene

In the darkness of the ancient museum, calmly seated in front of the terminal, words began to appear on the screen, as the human being's brain wave impulses created them. "A is for apple, B is for boy, and C is for cat," the words said, in a simple rhythm. This was a cadence from a new life energy from long ago that blended with the Circadian rhythm of his brain, and this special strength was, indeed, much more powerful than anything the man had ever experienced. This power was also addictive, and it was exhilarating, and it made him believe, for the very first time, that there might be hope for himself and for his fellow creatures.

* * *

Months later, all along the quiet roads inside Old Town, people walked in calm, purposeful strides on paths between the natural splendor: low-hanging trees kissed the faces of passersby, flowers of every color and variety measured their steps, and the sun itself seemed transfixed and shining just for them; there was no need for mechanical vehicles of transport, as there was no need for time at all. However, there were the signs that another society had once existed in the same place, but it was of a different time. These old buildings were called "museums" by the D.C. controllers who spoke to the humanity around the world, who all spoke the same oral language, and they told them that these were buildings containing ancient weapons of war, humorous and slow systems of transportation that were housed so that the children could go inside, climb all over them, turning wheels and pulling levers, and wondering what, in D.C. heaven, they were created to do? It was as if time had forgotten these antique weapons and vehicles, and left them as remembrances of a distant, morbid past, when people were violent, speeding creatures, obsessed with what time it was, obsessed with getting somewhere and being ruled by hard, vigorous labor. This was a world where androids did not do the farming and heavy labor. Thank D.C., now the world had evolved into a much more tranquil society, a civilization where time had become, after so many thousands of years, fixed in its proper place. Inside each and every living organism there pulsed the miraculous control of the Circadian Rhythm of the Divine Conglomerates.

Stanley Wakerman knew something was changing, and he recognized an imperfection in his world that was slowly twisting its way into his brain and making him think in strangely different ways. He wore the standard green uniform of D.C. Logos, and this was why he, alone, out of the thousands of people walking throughout the city that day, traveled by teleportation. Only civil servants of the Divine Conglomerates, like Stanley Wakerman, had this facility of travel, because they alone kept the rhythms of the CLOCK Towers set and fine-tuned all over the planet.

Stanley instantly appeared at one tower, stepped inside with his tool belt of tuning and gauging instruments, and then it was quiet once more. The citizens outside, walking past the tower, were oblivious to what was going on inside; like the birds, the rabbits, the fish in the lake, these humans were programmed from birth to live life at the holy behest of the Divine Conglomerates. This was how peace was kept, second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, and so on, into the infinite Cosmos of the D.C. scientists. Quantum Physics had long ago solved the riddle of Einstein's perfect universe. The "God Particle" had been in front of them all along! It was through the combination of waves and particles that peace was maintained all over the world. These towers that D.C. Logos employee number 733328716-LOGOS, Stanley Wakerman, and the many

hundreds of thousands of workers like him who serviced and inspected these towers, were the transmitters of the waves that gave purpose to all living things.

However, as the cameras captured the reality of Stanley's daily rounds, they could sense that he was behaving differently today. No, these D.C. cameras did not have emotion or the gift of metaphor, but if they could think, they would be wondering why this employee was not going on to the next tower, which was a mere ten meters down the road. Instead, they watched him as he ducked inside an old office building inside Bazaar del Mundo off Presidio Drive. They could feel his body heat as he climbed the stairs, but then, he was out of range. He was off the spectrum of programmed reality. These buildings were so old that they did not contain the modern D.C. surveillance equipment. But, now that he had felt the truth of the mutant gene inside him, Stanley Wakerman could give us authenticity from his perspective. At long last, a human was existentially moving and thinking about reality on his own! The peaceful atmosphere outside this small office building, in this antiquated tourist town of San Diego, had suddenly become corrupted by the independent, shadow-like figure climbing the stairs of Sunset World Wide Web Industries, one of the handsful of museums to a bygone era, when the connection of computers was the last civilized link of communications between so-called "free" citizens throughout the world. This was a unit from 2738, one year before all language was terminated and image became the major communication received by the masses. It still had the quaint thought processors that transmitted one's thoughts into images on the color screen.

But, wait a moment! These were not images coming out of the head of Stanley Wakerman and showing on his screen. Slowly, as if growing out of the earth, strangely black, digital alphabetic symbols were gathering on the white surface and erupting into reality in front of him. Stanley looked at them in shock, and he began to sweat, nauseated by the fact that he was once more performing the ritual that separated man from beast and freedom from totalitarianism. He was now, after all these months, finally forming words from his own unique thoughts and expressing them to another human being. His teacher, whom he had never met, had been his lone guide, and she was the one bringing his consciousness out of the darkness of the D.C. waves of light outside and into the mysterious, radiant glow of Sunset Internet Industries. As his words came into being, he glanced furtively around him, in great fear and trepidation, as if this moment would suddenly implode on him, and the Circadian Rhythm of the Divine Conglomerates would violently come pouring back into his brain, trapping him once more inside his appropriate destiny. She uploaded to him, not the images of entertainment, games and sexual experimentation that the masses received each day, but new kinds of digital packets containing other words, by other authors, from the distant past. The words of Shakespeare, Locke, Eliot, Pound, Hitler, Melville, Poe, Obama, Eisenhower, they kept streaming up into his purview, where he could pour over them and gain speed in his quest to obliterate the life-long conditioning of D.C. images and the wave receptor that had been glowing inside his brain from birth. Was he the only one who felt this way? The teacher said he was not, but could he believe her? What they were doing together was punishable by imprisonment and death. Was it all worth the danger? What was he going to do with this new knowledge, and where would it lead him? The teacher did not say what he should do. She only praised him when he improved his reading and writing skills, and she kept the incessant uploading of books—yes, that's what she called them—books! Volumes containing the thoughts and ideas of free peoples from long ago, who were, quite obviously, not peaceful, not content with reality as it was, and they came flooding down from the ages at him like a torrent of confusing wisdom. This had to be the meaning he had

never experienced before, and Stanley Wakerman was not going to give up all this new freedom without a fight!

*Office of the Director, Anomalies and Enemies of A.L.L., Vienna, Austria, February 5, 2852.*

Communiqué to the Supreme Council of Divine Conglomerates

From: Joseph Helmut Bowerstaf, Director, D.C. implant number 3568665210-AEA. Top Secret Language Transmission number 66221108.

I discovered his WAG yesterday. Not only was he violating the transceiver code with his use of words in open transmission, he was also communicating to others, which made him an enemy of A.L.L. As I am in charge of the search and arrest of any and all known enemies, it is my job to intercept his activities and put an end to the language broadcasts.

I am publishing these words of D.C. Logos employee number 733328716-LOGOS, Stanley Wakerman, so the council may act when I finally bring him in. Yes, I will track him down and destroy his network of mutants. However, I believe that we may want to put him under the genetescope, if you will, to determine the microbiologic cause of this tragic anomaly. The following are the recorded language transmissions of his most recent broadcast:

*Old Town, San Diego, in the D.C. State of California, United States of America, December 25, 2852.*

The day the mutant clock gene began to plague our city, I was on the A.L.L. detail, cruising in and out of the hubs throughout downtown San Diego, making sure the giant, forty feet tall towers were correctly set and sending out the three thousand layers of wireless broadband throughout the community for the State Logos System. Without the carefully set frequencies and powerful WIMAX of A.L.L., we were told, our peaceful world society would quickly return to its belligerent past. Aligned Logos Latitudes (A.L.L.) was the acronym for the control that the Divine Conglomerates had over our planet. As a civil servant employee of D.C. Logos for fifteen years, I am well aware of all the pitfalls of our system of so-called "perfection." Each of the four thousand waves controls a different level of society. Plants and animals are on circadian wavelengths 1-2,386, and humans are on 2,386-4,000. Of course, the higher up the broadcasting spectrum, the more complex the signal that is being sent out. This is where the variance matters. The slightest alteration in frequency can cause a behavioral problem, even though D.C. scientists program the latitude of five wavelengths on either side for any changes that might occur. I have seen murders committed by people who have lost their "Inner Light of Joy" signal. I have also watched children violently turn on their own parental controls when they lost connections to their "Game Channel" signal.

In our trade, we are called "Clockers," "Trekkies," or "Toons" because we travel by teleportation to do our tuning of towers. Wavelength 3,000 is the science fiction channel, and every known and ancient TV, movie or 3D show ever created are broadcast into the minds of human receivers around the world. Distractive entertainment plays an important role in the D.C. World View, as "happy receivers are productive receivers." Of course, no entertainment is ever broadcast until one is off work and in domicile. And, since the WIMAX of A.L.L. long ago replaced the ancient television, computer and radio technologies and their retarded bandwidth waste, our D.C. System has been regulated and controlled for over five hundred years, and there has been no war, no social violence beyond the isolated "wavelength murder," and we believed it would last forever until the day the Mutant Clock Gene began to take its toll on our populace around the world.

* * *

D.C. Director, Joseph Bowerstaf, immediately issued an order to stop Wakerman's teleportation privileges, as he was now an enemy of D.C. Logos. In effect, he was a renegade terrorist, and a printed order was sent via top secret crypto-transmission to programmer scientists inside the Logos Unit 52 in Vienna. They quickly developed code to transmit via WIMAX to all towers in the region of San Diego, which would instruct every D.C. controller unit to find and capture this renegade employee number 733328716-LOGOS, Stanley Wakerman, alive, and bring him back to Vienna for biological examination. What still puzzled the director, however, was the fact that in order to communicate in language, he would have to have been taught by someone else. This was, after all, the nature of the ancient communications system now strictly controlled by top D.C. Conglomerate authorities. With a teacher, there was no learning on one's own, and it was the presence of this teacher that made Director Bowerstaf fearful. The only logical conclusion he could come up with as to this teacher's existence was that he or she was a D.C. Conglomerate official and he or she had consciously chosen to communicate with Wakerman and teach him the forbidden language.

* * *

As Stanley sat at his ancient computer terminal, he could see the civilians outside through the frosted window. They busily existed in programmed ignorance, going from point A to point B, blissfully enjoying some form of image entertainment that was being transmitted into their receptor implants, never realizing that on the other side of the window, inside this run-down building, a rebel was hatching a plot to overthrow the current regime. "We have others now, Stanley," she said, and he could feel a shiver go up his spine. "We will meet at the zoo tonight at midnight and plan our revolution."

At the zoo? Revolution? What did the teacher know that he did not? How many "others" were out there? What might they possibly accomplish that could counter the hundreds of years of wave control by D.C. Conglomerates? Was it even a valid revolution? What were they returning to? Under D.C. control, at least disease had been eradicated, food and life were extended indefinitely, global warming was ancient history, and population was rigidly controlled to prevent disaster in the environment. What was it that made this new revolution worthwhile? Perhaps he would find out at the zoo meeting. One thing was certain. He would finally meet his teacher.

Later that night, Stanley rather stealthily approached the San Diego Zoo on Park Boulevard. He had, of course, shucked his green, D.C. Logos uniform in favor of a thick-red, farmed-cotton, one-piece civilian jumper. The night was full of the cries of the controlled animals in the zoo. Like all zoos in the present world, this one was no exception; it contained the towers of D.C. Logos broadcasting A.L.L. It was always open to the public, as the public was as controlled as the animals were, so there was no need for fences. As a child, his control parents had taken him to this same zoo. There was not one thing that had gone wrong that day. Like the rest of his life, it was a perfectly programmed experience in family harmony. As he walked into the underground tunnel near the Elephant Safari, the appointed meeting place, Stanley took a last deep breath, and pictured the old, perfect world of D.C. wave control fading from his reality. Soon, perhaps tonight, there would be a new, braver and freer society on planet Earth, and he would be an integral part of its formation.

Inside the dark tunnel, glowing like a distant firefly, Jasmine Genji, D.C. Assistant Director of Imagination Entertainment, stood, ramrod stiff, her body radiant from incandescent, internal lighting. She was tall, svelte and beautifully exotic. Her breasts were perfectly formed and rounded fruit beneath her jumper, and they heaved as she came into closer view, causing

Stanley's respiration to pick up speed. There were no "others," however, and it seemed this meeting might also be some kind of trap or constructed sham. As he came up to her, he spoke, in a harsh whisper, internally afraid that someone would overhear. "Where are the others?" he asked.

Her red lips formed the words inside her glowing halo, "They are not as yet physical, Stanley Wakerman, but they will soon become so."

"How do we make them physically appear then?" He leaned against the wall of the tunnel, mesmerized by the beauty of this Asian woman, his teacher for so many months. She must know the answer, as it was his only hope. He had gone too far now, he was outside the grid, and they were both condemned and were probably being hunted at that very moment. Unless she could come up with a miraculous answer, this new-found freedom would be short-lived.

"You thought this mutant CLOCK gene had spontaneously developed inside you. Is this not true?" she asked.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Stanley, a bit taken aback.

"What if I told you that I created the wave that caused this gene to come into birth and that it had been there all along?" Those rosy lips curled into a smile, and Stanley felt immediately aroused.

"You mean every human being has the gene? Who are you to know this? I don't know of any D.C. Logos wave tuner who can decipher wave content. What gives you this privileged knowledge?"

"I *am* one of the privileged. But my privilege has allowed me to look back into my own history and into our collective history, and what I discovered were the freedoms that we had lost a long time ago. This gene was always part of our biological make-up, as it was thought to have been the producer of bipolar insanity in the ancient era. Humans who had it were committed to institutions and kept away from normal society. However, I discovered that this gene, if it were given the correct wave stimulus, produced another side of its reality. Like all reality, this gene had yin and yang aspects. On the other side of insanity was independent thought on par with the D.C. controllers. There was one big difference, however, between D.C. controllers and us."

"Us?" Stanley was surprised at being included with his teacher. He thought his implant was only limited to his particular caste and that his personal "discovery" had made him a mutant.

"Yes, humans long ago possessed another gene that the D.C. Conglomerates wanted eradicated. It was the gene for compassion. Without compassion, the world, as the Conglomerates saw it, could at last become perfect. So, they suppressed it with their algorithms and each human implant kept out what you are now feeling inside you, Stanley. What made you first go inside one of the old buildings and get on an ancient computer?" she asked.

Stanley was stumped. "I don't know. I guess I was bored that day. I just went inside because I had become bored with my job, with life as I had known it."

"Yes! Don't you see? One of my ancient spiritual leaders, called Gautama Buddha, made a conscious decision to forsake his knowledge of eternal bliss in order to be reborn to become a teacher. What made him refuse inner paradise in order to teach his fellow Man this secret? Compassion caused him to do it, and this is what caused me to rebel against my teachers. You did not wander into that building by mistake, Stanley. I was the one who changed your implant so you could seek your own enlightenment, so to speak. I have done this to many others, and this makes me an enemy of the status quo."

"You are very foolish," said Stanley. "You must know that the D.C. Logos monitors all communication systems, even the ancient ones in the museums. What makes you think they aren't waiting outside right now to arrest us when we leave this tunnel?"

"There are only two million D.C. officials around the world. However, there are over three billions of us. I would not have called you here unless there were enough others to assist us. The Conglomerates were very lazy in their plan. Although they have established inner control with their WIMAX towers, they did not keep enough weapons sufficient to destroy any possible rebellion. Their own version of paradise lulled them into passivity. Not only have I triggered this gene of compassion in over two hundred million citizens of these United States, I have also given them the instructions to open the ancient armories in cities all over this country and arm themselves with enough weapons to mount a successful defense of their true homeland. They now realize, as you do, Stanley Wakerman, that compassion is the gene that separates us from the Conglomerates. Life, no matter how perfectly controlled from the outside, is not worth living inside unless we can act with free choice. Yes, we must have free choice to make life meaningful and full of paradox. And that's why we will leave this tunnel right now and meet up with our brothers and sisters, millions of them, and they will lead us all into the innovative light of a novel existence. We will destroy the towers first, and then we shall defend our new world from any invading forces that the paltry D.C. Conglomerates can create. I know they cannot succeed because I am one of them! Fools? They are the fools, Stanley. They did not understand the mutant gene at all. Each of us must be a little crazy to believe in free choice and the liberty of individual thought. And, it is insane, is it not, to want this freedom for everyone? So, come with me, and we will leave this dark tunnel and meet the bringers of the new light."

Stanley Wakerman and Jasmine Genji walked out of the tunnel beneath the Elephant Safari to meet their new world order. Outside the zoo, assembled by the hundreds of thousands, stood the mutant rebels, armed to the teeth with laser weapons, guided missiles, and the destructive forces of most of this new rebel nation.

In other cities of the United States of America, this outward assemblage was also taking place. They were determined to return to the earlier era of freedom to fight the forces of tyranny and control and put up a resistance wherever the D.C. Conglomerates attempted to control others. Was it a regression into the dark ages, or was it a return to a golden age of compassion? Only time would tell, and time was now, at long last, set free.

As Stanley walked toward the images of the rebels standing outside the perimeter of the zoo, Jasmine Genji pulled from her jumper a remote control unit. As her long forefinger adjusted the microwave transmission to her student's implant, the images of the rebels in his brain became clearer. Jasmine had, at last, created the perfect reality game for the masses. As they watched these calculated events play out, in real time, safe inside their D. C. domiciles, the total, cathartic appreciation would keep them tuned in for many more episodes. She had already begun to plan these episodes, and they were kept safely inside her personal memory module within her office in Vienna. Using these civil servants as actors would keep costs down, and the propaganda value to the Divine Conglomerates' purpose would be even more valuable than the excitement the show would ultimately engender. Jasmine moved the remote control signal so it would erase this first episode of "The Mutant Gene." Stanley Wakerman, D.C. Logos employee number 733328716-LOGOS, would immediately return to the A.L.L. grid and slip back into the programmed and serene present of the Divine Conglomerate's plan for his personal existence . . . until she needed him again for her next episode.

## S.S.I.

All over the United States of America, the contestants looked up into the sky and saw the plan being written into the smoggy atmosphere. However, after these communications off the grid, most of the competitors returned to the reality of the hunt.

During the first eight months of competition, in each state of the union, 5,500 Great Race combatants had been hunted down and terminated. Today, the final 500 were coming to San Diego, and Sam Lawson was ready to head out into the streets to find his quarry. Without the hunt, he knew there would be no final victory at all.

Sam Two Eagles Lawson, S.S.I. number 572-886-4436, State of California, City of San Diego, raised his solar and fusion powered laser—the standard issue rifle for all contestants—and pointed it at the target on the other side of his decrepit motel room. It was a particle hologram showing the form of another S.S.I. competitor, standing at port arms with his own laser rifle.

Sam was 25 years old, and he stood a little over six feet tall. His black hair was long, in the American Native tradition, and he wore a red bandana around his dark-skinned forehead.

These hologram targets were all part of the "S.S.I. Competitor Package" sent by the government to all participants in the yearly, winner-take-all, Great Race for Social Security. Also included in the package he received on April 15, 2088, were the requisite Internet portable digital cranium camera and G.P.S. monitoring device.

Sam knew the drill, as he had watched the competitors in other years, as he slaved away at his job on the human clone farm, Mercury Workers Incorporated, outside Phoenix.

Sam was an Apache who had fought in Arizona during the first eight months of competition, and he learned to hunt from his father, Del Zamora Lawson, when they worked on the cloned cattle ranch outside the bubble of Phoenix. There were no natural births allowed for animals in the food supply.

His father took him out into the desert to hunt wild jackrabbits, cougars, coyotes and other wild animals with bows and arrows. Ever since the elites had confiscated the casinos and sent the American Natives out to survive on their own once more, they had kept their heritage going by oral stories, as the government's clone soldiers purposely destroyed all the tribal records.

It was easier for the Apaches, as they had never been a completely acceptable tribe in the days of the Indian Confederation. They were seen as thieves and outlaws, even in ancient times, so Sam and his father learned about survival because it was in their blood to do so. Geronimo, their old leader, had gone on the war path with the Mexicans and with the Americanos.

Sam considered himself at war with everyone since his father had been killed by a renegade contestant in the S.S.I. Great Race competition of 2078. Sam, the fifteen-year-old boy, watched his father's head explode from the lethal death ray from this man's rifle, and he vowed to get even.

Before coming to San Diego, Sam was trained by the elites to program and insert computer chips. His job at Mercury Workers in Arizona was to implant the cyborg control chips (CCCs) into the brains of the human clones so they could be easily manipulated by the exclusives who lived inside the restricted bubble communities around the United States.

He also knew that before they became cyborgs, these clones had been just like he was—they had emotions, they thought about their safety and their future, and they could discuss daily events—in short, Sam often wondered if life weren't better as a clone.

After he inserted the control chip, the clones were permitted privileged access into the bubbled-over neighborhoods where the atmosphere was clean and sealed-off from the sun's scorching heat rays that penetrated the ozone-depleted wisps of clouds that now encircled the Earth. Each day, outside the bubbles, was a veritable hell, and Sam and his fellow workers knew that their only chance at true redemption was in the S.S.I. Great Race competition. Only those who lived inside the bubbles, with its purified air and their genetically engineered bodies, had any chance at surviving beyond age 40, which was the average age of survival outside the bubbles.

Sam pointed the rifle at the hologram, aiming at the head, and pulled the trigger. A stream of laser light erupted from his gun, sending a bolt of lightning across the room in a micro-second, and the target splintered into millions of glittering particles.

Sam knew that only a head shot was successful in the competition. Each contestant wore laser-protective clothing, complete with digital music speakers in the collar, air-conditioned comfort throughout, and the emblazoned "S.S.I. Great Race" sewn in scarlet letters on the back of the blue trooper jacket. Only the head was left unprotected, and this was the goal of every competitor: to explode the source of all human pain.

Sam often thought of the competition as a computer zombie hunt game. After all, his life, and the lives of millions of other poor Americans, had become a repetitive chore of supplying the elites with their comforts.

This was also the case around the world, as the poor overseas were treated even more treacherously. At least, in America, the masses were allowed to compete for social security. Most of Europe, Asia and Africa had become medieval feudal outposts, where the rich lived in luxury beneath their hermitically sealed bubbles, and the poor slaved outside under the wrath of the hideous climate and the preying outlaws.

Weapons had long ago been confiscated, and the poor—except for the Americans in the Great Race for Social Security—were subjected to brief lives of hard labor and little else. Only the controlling powers inside the bubbles possessed the weapons of mass destruction necessary to protect them from the teeming hordes outside.

It was often an entertainment for the elites to sit inside cafés that were constructed next to their impenetrable bubble walls, made of layers of clay nanosheets and a water-soluble polymer that shared chemistry with white glue. By mimicking a brick-and-mortar molecular structure found in seashells, this plastic was as strong as steel but light and transparent.

The café privileged would discuss the latest psycho-drama on Digital World Vision or watch the clone lingerie fashion show, as the poor workers outside would press their faces against the bubble, watching them eat and laugh, and the children of these rich patrons would play "Zap!" by pushing red buttons on their side of the bubble.

These buttons controlled bursts of electric shock that would literally cause the unfortunate soul who was pressed against the plastic to boogie a wild dance and then catch fire. The kids called them "crazy crispy critters," and they could play the game endlessly while their parents relaxed and downloaded the latest news and entertainment on their table receivers.

The Great Race had been going on for eight months. The competitors had been reduced to five hundred, who were now converging on San Diego for the grand finale. After the start, in

April, over six thousand contestants had been viewed as they hunted each other down in most of the fifty-two states, including the new states of Puerto Rico and Cuba.

The poor who lived outside of the bubbles, as well as the elite who lived inside, were transfixed in front of their receivers every Sunday evening, on Digital World Vision, for the six hours of live action that was broadcast, in all-sense-around detail, across the country.

With dynamic digital detail, the viewers could feel every laser strike as it penetrated the head of the victim, exploding the skull, spraying gray matter and blood out in a burst of furious glory. And, since each competitor had a cranium camera, the effect was made even more exciting to watch.

They all knew--rich and poor alike--the intoxicating symbolism of the Great Race. Everything about capitalism kept this game at the top of the charts of viewers everywhere. The rich thought about how their kind would become genetically richer by allowing such a superior competitor and survivor into their gene pool. The poor outside the bubbles also dreamed of being that single competitor who could endure, becoming the last one standing.

Only the best workers and the most physically fit became the competitors allowed to enter the Great Race for S.S.I., and only one survived to reap the reward: all the money in the insurance fund, as well as the rest of life lived in luxury behind one of the American bubbles of his or her choice.

An added bonus for the viewers was the constant "chatter" that went on between the competitors. They were allowed to communicate through digital wifi, and it was amusing to listen to them "talk trash" at their opposition, just as it had been entertaining when the viewers had watched and listened to the old-timers play professional basketball back in the day.

During the first eight months of competition, Sam knew that when the cameras were turned off, and the viewers were not watching, he could talk privately to his fellow competitors across the United States. When the show was not on, it was a time he believed to be sacred, as he did not hate his fellows. He, in fact, used these off-hours to explain to them about his work, and they would, in turn, explain to him about theirs.

Most, of course, were simply starving and unemployed, and this was the last chance they had to keep on living. Some, however, were factory workers like Sam, and they understood the complexities of cyborg-clone technology, and the ways these human-like beings were utilized by the exclusives inside their bubble communities.

"Yeah, I make the control chips that are inserted into their brains," Sam told his competitors. "Some are soldiers, some are servants, and some are sex slaves. What are we? If we're lucky, we are glorified factory workers or farmers who are supplying what they used to call the 'house niggers' to the slave owners on Southern plantations during the Civil War. That's right. I'm saying we are living under conditions of slavery! Unless we can break these bonds of control, we will forever be held prisoner."

It was during one of these private communications off the grid during the first eight months of competition that their plan was finally developed. Sam discovered that there were several final contestants who worked for World Vision and were experts at editing digital special effects. Others, like Sam, worked for cyborg cloning factories and had become programmers of the chips that were surgically inserted into the brains of these "house nigger clones." The details of their plan, however, were kept secret, and this top secret came in the form of the most ancient of communications, taught to them by Sam Two Eagles, the smoke signal.

The elites had chosen the final competition in San Diego because all the entertainment there was bubbled-over and protected for the privileged tourists, who journeyed, under armed,

warrior-clone escort, from their community bubbles to the recreational bubbles of San Diego. Of course, no elites would be present when the contestants fought. The S.S.I. Great Race combatants were allowed special entry because the air under the bubbles was clear and fresh, and the combatants would, therefore, display much more energy as they fought to the death.

Sam killed the first one hundred opponents inside the bubble of the San Diego Zoo. He shot one at the Gorilla compound, and several of the apes stood watching as the head of the human standing beside them exploded, as he was trying to crouch behind a boulder inside the cage. One by one, over the days of televised excitement, Sam Lawson picked-off his zoo rivals.

Some were caught inside the Elephant Safari; others were over at the Reptile section of the park. One body crashed through the python's pit and was wrapped up immediately by the giant snake, who didn't realize this instant meal was sans cranium. Another victim of Sam's laser was crushed by charging elephants who were frightened into stampede by the lighting explosion from the gun.

The other four hundred ninety-eight were shot dead inside SeaWorld bubble, or out at the Wild Animal Park bubble, or, during the clubbing done in the downtown Gaslamp Quarter bubble. Sam had an ingenious way of stalking his victims. He could crawl, snaking his way over concrete, dirt, glass, used condoms and rivers of pollution, to finally draw a bead on his intended victim.

Men and women were shot by Sam as they attempted to spring down on him from ledges and from buildings; he exploded their heads as they got into secret groups in secret plots to outnumber him. He was almost gunned-down when a contestant beaded down on him as he was eating squirrel meat in Balboa Park.

The audience collectively gasped as they saw one of the best competitors in the history of the Great Race as he almost got eliminated by a female genetic clone engineer from Hawaii. Luckily, she had spent her formative years surfing waves instead of hunting, so her shot was wide, and Sam Two Eagles sprang to life—sending a deadly pulse of energy into the young woman's skull, and it disintegrated into the morning air around her.

Finally, there were two: Sam and an unemployed bounty hunter from Washington D.C. This man, like Sam Two Eagles, was a loner who had a grudge against humanity. His name was Patrice Collier, and he was 25. African-American, he stood six and half feet tall, and he had killed over 200 renegade contestants for the government. Some years, competitors would often go rogue, and the elites would hire bounty hunters like Patrice to find them and terminate their presence before anybody not in the competition got hurt. Even the government needed the workers outside the bubbles.

Sam was hit in the stomach by Patrice as he stood outside the Museum of Man inside the Balboa Park bubble. The laser beam bounced off his laser-resistant jumper and careened into the building's edifice, sending up a cloud of concrete and mortar. This gave Sam just enough time to duck inside the museum and hide behind the Egyptian Mummy Exhibit.

In a dramatic climax for the Great Race, Sam Two Eagles Lawson sprang from the Mummy's sarcophagus as Patrice entered the exhibit. Viewers watched in horror—the young black man was quite a favorite to millions of viewers—as he was gunned down by this living Mummy and his laser rifle.

After the Victory Parade down Broadway in downtown San Diego, Sam Two Eagles was given his social security reward of forty-eight million dollars and the choice of any bubble community in San Diego County. Sam chose La Jolla.

Inside one of the caves in the La Jolla Cliffs, Sam Two Eagles Lawson sat with his mate, Margaret Spreckels, 19, who was a clone of DNA from John D. Spreckels, the sugar baron, and one of the richest men in the history of San Diego. She was a perfectly formed and genetically engineered woman, with long blonde hair, a ravishing figure, and clear complexion. She was chosen for Sam by the elite community of La Jolla, as they believed their progeny would be strong and beautiful.

Sam was showing young Margie how to build a fire, as she was not aware of such pagan rituals. Most of her life had been lived under the carefully watchful eye of some cyborg-clone nanny or other servant, and she was fascinated by her lover's mastery over Nature.

The fire was on the ledge outside the cave, and as he stoked the wood into the flame, Sam took off his red shirt and tossed it over his right shoulder. The dark muscles of his back rippled, as he added some seaweed to the fire, and it began to smoke profusely. Sam then picked up his shirt and held it above the smoke, stopping the clouds for a moment, and he removed the shirt, allowing puffs of dark smoke to escape up into the atmosphere over the cliffs.

Down below, on La Jolla Drive, the bubble wall was transparent, and the smoke signals from the cliffs could be seen by those on the other side. When Sam completed his work, he put down his dirty shirt and lay his mistress down upon it. She was now naked, and her white breasts were passionately heaving as he came down on top of her. She sucked in his tongue and inhaled his smoky odor as her legs opened for him.

The human cyborg-clone servants did not live long. They were programmed and genetically conditioned to survive about two months maximum, as their owners and programmers knew they would become too much of a threat if they were to exist too long inside the pristine atmosphere of the bubble. They did not trust their own technology, as these were, after all, human beings.

Even cloned humans had a propensity for the unexpected, and the best chip in the world could control a human brain only so long. In the future, it was hoped, they could convert to a totally robotic staff, but this was not possible today. So, after two months, all the clones were exchanged for newly programmed ones from outside the bubble.

The clone revolt took place on Sunday, September 11, 2088, at six-thirty in the evening. All eyes were glued on Digital World Vision to watch the new contestants being chosen to compete in the 2089 version of the S.S.I. Great Race.

They did not see the newly programmed clones leave their posts inside the mansions, the cafes, the theaters, all of the leisure spots inside the La Jolla bubble. They left their duty posts to form a long, winding line that headed down the cliffs to the bubble wall on La Jolla Drive.

They opened the single door in the wall and they let in the humans—the same five-hundred humans--who had competed in the previous year's Great Race finals. No, they were not dead. They were as alive as the freedom inside their beating, natural hearts.

How was this possible? It was all part of the plan that took place off the grid and in the sky during the first eight months of competition. These final 500 had ultimately agreed to participate in the ruse so they could capture one of the elite bubble communities.

What the millions had been viewing over their receivers in San Diego was a fraud and a complex demonstration of masterful digital editing by some of the very same World Vision editors who were competing in the Great Race.

The Great Race finals had been a digital recording of special effects and an intricately plotted drama by the director, one Sam Two Eagles Lawson. The 500 acted out the hunt and pretended to be shot, and the head explosions were added in later by the World Vision editors.

The entire recording was broadcast as a live feed to the millions of viewers, and this gave the 500 time to complete the rest of their plan.

Included in this plot against the elites was the fact that the newly cloned and programmed servants that were now turning on their masters had not been surgically modified with cyborg control chips as ordered. Members of the 500 had made certain that the human clones who replaced the La Jolla batch had no CCCs inserted in their brains. Instead, these were free and clearly thinking human clones, advancing through the bubble door, who now had something to show their former dictators.

These new human clones were freed by their new compatriots, the band of 500 brothers and sisters, now declaring a new government inside the La Jolla bubble, and all of the old retinue who resisted was being methodically crushed at the hands of these new clones and the former S.S.I. Great Race finalist competitors.

The old regime, which had been based on superior genetics and fear of the unknown, was being replaced by a new regime based on democratic values and the unhampered human genome. In the words of the ancient musical artist, Gil Scott-Heron, "the revolution will not be televised." The final laser light show of exploding heads could be seen for miles in the distance outside this newly freed bubble of humanity.

# Noah

(Inspired by the lectures of Jacob M. Appel)

It was heartbreaking. As the keepers dragged Daisy out of the cage, little Noah screamed, and he snarled, but when he began butting his wide forehead against the wall, two men had to grab him and give him a sedative. As he lay on the small cot inside his cage, Noah could feel the drug loosening his limbs, and the dream came to him once more. Ever since he could think, at one year old, Noah had the same dream. In it, he stands before a large opening to some vast underworld. His senses instantly become alert; he can smell odors of the pungent earth, the damp moisture of rebirth, and the sounds are those of insects, birds, and the free wind blowing in front of the cavernous opening that leads down into what he sees as oblivion or protection; he can't distinguish whether he is facing death or a new life. He knows that the dream world is as real as the other world.

The birth of Noah probably would have never taken place had it not been for the lymphatic filariasis pandemic of 2318 wherein millions of humans were experiencing grotesque enlargement of the limbs and genitals and damage to internal organs. This strain of mosquito-borne disease was totally resistant to antibiotics, and the public was, quite obviously, clamoring for some kind of cure. Even before the new plague, at least one billion people had been at risk from this malady--one in six of the world's population. During the first six months of 2318, however, over 120 million people had been severely disfigured and disabled by filariasis. In addition, the social and psychological impact was enormous--often destroying marriages and family relationships.

That's when he stepped into the picture. His name is Seymour M. Davidson, M. D., Ph.D., a genetic engineer who was first acclaimed for the successful bringing to term of the 65,000 years old wooly mammoth by developing the procedure of modifying the DNA of the modern elephant's egg so that after each round of changes it would progressively resemble the DNA in a mammoth egg. The final-stage egg could then be brought to term in an elephant mother. As a result, there were now 215 mammoths in zoos around the world for visitors and scientists to see and appreciate.

Indeed, he was proud of his work, and when he saw the tortured images of his fellow humans coming at him over the digital airwaves, he began to calculate the theorem that would result in the birth of Noah, the first Neanderthal ever conceived by genetic engineering. Since Seymour already knew the process worked, his idea to develop Noah was very similar. The chimpanzee's DNA would take the place of the elephant's DNA (in the first equation), so he could gradually manipulate the sequencing of the double-stranded nucleic acid until it matched the DNA of the Neanderthal. The resultant egg would be fertilized and brought to term inside the chimpanzee mother. In addition, he would use the specific genetic coding to allow the body parts and internal organs of his progeny to be accepted by the human recipients. Dr. Phyllis Bowdler, with whom he shared the Nobel Prize in 2312, had perfected the genetic coding which allowed the transplants and skin grafts to take place. They were nicknamed by the clerical community and the Vatican as "The Frankenstein Twins." However, since the world's health was at stake, the possible treatment of human beings was more important than the religious values of a few.

The genius of his plan, of course, was the fact that no modern human genes would be used, and Seymour would have to guarantee the government that his offspring would not, in any manner, shape or form result in *homo sapiens*. Seymour had no qualms about using his creations to save humanity, as he was convinced that his "cave man" would not be human. And, as far as the people who believed that Evolution was not real, his experiment would disprove their scientific heresy once and for all.

These conservatives didn't object in 2008, when scientists announced the cloning of rhesus macaque embryos. That, too, was the creation of nonhuman primate life. Follow the human lineage three branches beyond the primate order and the rhesus macaques are still with us. Follow the human line two more branches and the chimps are still with us. One more branch and you're down to us and the Neanderthals. They thought it was okay to clone a macaque and a chimp, so it was pretty hard to explain why, at that last fork in the road, you were forbidden to clone a Neanderthal.

On Friday, September 1, 2318, Dr. Bowdler and Dr. Davidson were secretly transported by Air Force One, President Benjamin Richardson's solar jet, to a lab located inside a bunker on the island of Cuba. The two scientists were housed in underground domiciles next to the sprawling lab that covered fifteen acres beneath the surface of the sandy Cuban soil on the coastal section of the island that used to be known as Guantanamo Bay but was now called *Cubano Pacifico*. Each room was very Spartan, equipped with a shower, a small library, and a military bunk with government-issue sheets and blankets. They employed a group of twenty-six laborers and medical technicians who came from the progressive medical schools of Cuba.

Over the next year, Drs. Davidson and Bowdler supervised the construction of the "habitat kennels" where the eventual Neanderthals would be kept for "harvesting." The doctors walked down the middle of the main housing unit, between 500 cages, 250 on each side, and made certain that each cage had the requisite running water, food chute to deposit the diet of fish and beef, a small cave dug into the walls of the cage and a latrine dug into the floor. Each cage was fifty feet wide, fifty feet high, and fifty feet deep.

As the two doctors stood at the far end of the compound, surveying the future homes of their progeny, Esteban Gamboa, the supervisor of the Cuban technicians, came up to them to report that the medical laboratory was now ready for the genetic engineering to begin. Dr. Davidson turned to Dr. Bowdler and said, "We'll be saving the world, Phyllis. That's what we'll be remembered for. These animals won't be aware of anything."

* * *

Noah's mother was a chimp called "Daisy," and the birth was performed by caesarian section, due to the size of Noah. He was almost nine pounds, at birth, and the little chimp's pelvis was much too narrow for the delivery. Ironically, in the wild forests of central Africa, chimpanzees were now being hunted, killed and sold to the cities as "bushmeat," bringing a higher price than beef or pork. Thousands of chimp orphans were left to starve because they were too small to be sold as meat. Daisy was one of the rescued chimps who was now playing a vital role in the salvation of humanity from the deadly virus plague. Although she was unaware of her important duty, she was sensitive of being a mother to Noah, and when he was presented to her by the doctors on that day following surgery, she immediately loved him as her own.

* * *

Yevgeny Gamboa had contracted lymphatic filariasis. He was the guerilla leader in the caves of the Sierra Maestra Mountains above Guantanamo Bay. Although the democratic election had created the new Capitalist Commonwealth, Gamboa and about five thousand of his

followers had taken up residence in the hill country that had a long history of fighting the slave cultures of Western Imperialism. Starting with the resistance of the Tainos under Guamá, the Cimarrón Neo-Taíno nations escaped slave cultures, and the Ten Years' War and the Cuban War of Independence were fought in these mountains. And various minor conflicts such as the Race War of 1912, and Antonio Guiteras' uprisings against Gerardo Machado and Fulgencio Batista were also begun in the Sierra Maestra. After Fidel Castro returned to Cuba from exile in Mexico, he and the few other survivors from the failed attack on Moncada Barracks hid out in Sierra Maestra. They were able to expand the 26th of July Movement, starting a revolution throughout the region. They built up guerrilla columns, and in collaboration with other groups in the central provinces, Escopeteros on the foothills and plains, and the urban resistance, eventually overthrew Fulgencio Batista.

Therefore, it was Yevgeny's objective to one day overthrow the United States Commonwealth of Cuba and return it to communism. However, since the rebel chief had contracted the pandemic disease, his genitals had swollen to the size of small cantaloupes, and it had become quite impossible to lead his troops in such a preposterous physical shape.

Spies in Guantanamo had gotten word to his band that the Americans had begun some top secret research beneath the earth near the bay. Several of his *confidentes* were employed as laborers and medical technicians by the Americans, and Gamboa knew that the project was to find a cure for the disease he had contracted.

Esteban Gamboa, Yevgeny's brother, was employed as a medical technician supervisor, and when he visited the cavernous hide-out of the guerillas on a weekend following the birth of Noah, Esteban was out of breath and quite excited. As he spoke to Yevgeny, his brother was sitting in a plush, crimson chair that had once been the property of Fidel in his Havana mansion. Black, long hair encircled his puffy face in ringlets, and his eyes were swollen shut. His engorged legs were propped up, and the grotesque bulge of his testicles under Yevgeny's camouflaged trousers looked inhuman and painful. "The Yankees are creating Neanderthals! It's amazing! They plan to harvest the body parts and use them for transplants and to develop a vaccine to cure the disease."

Yevgeny grimaced and tried to maneuver himself into a comfortable position in the chair's confines. "Good work, my brother! We shall wait until they have enough of these beasts to make it worth our while. Then, with your help, we will raid the compound and free our oppressed comrades."

Esteban looked confused. "*Mi hermano*, I don't understand. How will you get a transplant or a cure if we steal these Neanderthals from the *Americanos*?"

Yevgeny's voice had the same exasperated tone he always had when he had to explain Revolutionary philosophy to his younger sibling. "We shall capture the world's attention and explain how the Capitalists are using these poor cave men to exploit the masses and profit from their illness. We will also show these superior beings how to fight to win their ultimate freedom from the yoke of Capitalist greed. What better genetic coding is there for a guerilla than this Neanderthal?" Yevgeny laughed. "You fool! While we tell the world we are freeing these creatures to fight with us for freedom, we shall be using the Yankees' vaccine and developing our own creatures for warfare and for body parts! We shall create the greatest revolutionary force the world has ever seen! Our reserve corps will provide body parts lost in battle, and our cave man soldier will have the strength of ten men! Fidel and Raul would be so very proud of us, and we will overcome this Capitalist tyranny and return to our roots of revolutionary government."

* * *

When Yevgeny Gamboa's men raided the underground Neanderthal facility, Noah and his fifty brothers were three years old. With Esteban and a few others on the inside, the attack was bloodless and easily handled, considering the fact that the world's lymphatic filariasis pandemic was killing thousands per week. However, since the United States had become a poor nation, the government of business tycoon Benjamin Richardson was preparing to use the Neanderthals and the resulting vaccine as a very expensive resource to cure only those elites around the world who could afford such exclusive treatment. Despite the pleas of Drs. Davidson and Bowdler to allow the genetic discoveries to be used for the benefit of all mankind, the United States Congress had decided to use the new vaccine and body parts from the Neanderthals only for those nations who were willing to give the U. S. special status and finance loans to help relieve the extreme trade deficit, which had reached fifty trillions of dollars. Therefore, when the underground labs were raided by the Cuban revolutionaries, not a shot was fired, and the young Neanderthals were easily whisked away into the night and up into the Sierra Maestra Mountains. The only advantage the Americans had was the fact that the bandits were unable to capture the vaccine formula, so the banditos did the next best thing; they kidnapped the two American scientists.

* * *

Yevgeny Gamboa had become a monstrosity. He looked like a human peapod, as his body was one engorged blob of flesh. The Spanish came out of the narrow slit between his swollen cheeks, "Take them into the cavern and find out the vaccine! Torture them and do whatever you have to do. I don't care what it is. I want that vaccine!"

Seymour and Phyllis were dragged by the hair into the darkness of the cave. The four feet tall and three-year-old Neanderthals huddled together inside a large cage inside the major cavern of *Los Ciudadanos* hide-out and all but one were shivering with fear. Noah stood in the center of his brethren and remembered his dream. As they were carried up into the mountains, Noah had, strangely, not been afraid. When they reached the entrance to the deep caverns of the communists' retreat, the vision of the underworld from his dream was revisited inside his brain, and Noah knew they were meant to be there. He did not know the reason, as yet, but he knew it was all part of his dream.

The vaccine coerced from the scientists was used to cure the communist leader, Yevgeny, and he sent word out to Havana that he was building the greatest revolutionary army ever created. For the next fifteen years, as the Neanderthals grew, they were trained by Yevgeny's men to fight for the people's freedom. In addition, new births of Neanderthals were taking place in caves throughout the Sierra Maedras. Although the American puppet government of Juan Pasqual Leandro tried to blow-up the caves with bunker-buster bombs, they were rarely successful, and the genetic engineering would just move on to a different cavern. Yevgeny's plan was to build an army of a million Neanderthal warriors by 2339.

Noah, however, had different ideas. Although he trained alongside his brothers, Noah knew this was not freedom. In addition to martial arts and guerilla warfare techniques, they also learned the language of their trainers and the philosophy of revolution. Since the revolution never ended, then violence would always be a part of this so-called "freedom." To Noah, this would never do. His dreams held the promise of freedom in Nature, without the pressures of revolt. True, Nature had its own rules, and the fear of its power over all made Noah's dreams often turn into nightmares. In the back of his mind, Noah secretly kept the urge to protect his people free from the world of modern man.

Seymour and Phyllis, although subverted by the revolutionary bandits, still kept their scientific distance from the political reality of their confinement. They had rationalized the fact that were they still employed by the American government their work would be used for purely selfish reasons. Even though they were communists, their captors fed them well and kept the Neanderthals clean and healthy. The two elderly scientists often discussed the growth of the young Neanderthals and made notes about their development. The most shocking fact was that these were human beings and not animals as Seymour had guaranteed. Something in the genetic make-up gave them the human characteristics of memory and language. True to form, these young brutes were shorter than their human counterparts, with sloping foreheads, no chins, powerful shoulders, long, gangly arms and huge hands. Surprisingly, they could speak both Spanish and English very well. Many scientists had believed the race could not speak other than with signals and grunts, but these creations were fully vocal and completely literate. Phyllis had even begun to teach Noah how to write, and he was learning very quickly. Soon, he would be keeping his own record of tribal development, as he was seen as the alpha male of the group.

The most amazing observation the doctors made, however, was seeing the Neanderthals work. They did not speak; they were able to do their squad leader's bidding seemingly by telepathic abilities—that was the only explanation Seymour had for it—and the two scientists wondered if this were the reason why they had larger brains than humans: they were able to read each other's minds.

* * *

Drs. Davidson and Bowdler knew the flood had been predicted by scientists back in the early part of the Twenty-First Century, when Global Warming had begun to melt the polar ice and the increase in violent hurricanes and other weather catastrophes amplified death and destruction around the planet. Al Gore, the American former presidential candidate had even won the Nobel Prize for his efforts to stop the inevitable. However, the urgent situation went unheeded, and the governments around the world became fixated on their financial problems caused by the selfish and criminal acts of a few in the early part of the new century. Therefore, the Global Warming Crisis was eventually reduced to an acronym, "GWC," and, finally, it disappeared almost completely, except for a few blogs on the internet and inside infrequently read scientific journals. Instead, the world's visual mass communications consisted of advertisements for erectile dysfunction medications, anti-depressants, and unregulated "dietary supplements." Literacy had been reduced to an almost pictorial format: nobody ever read words anymore. The masses were distracted by entertainment, sports, and the terrorist wars, and the world population was blinded from its own downfall.

The agri-business meat industries kept confining the animals into smaller and more polluted environments and the microbes kept rebelling with new strains of virulent and vaccine-resistant flus and other diseases. Pandemics were manipulated by the governments to keep populations and school costs down and the people were fighting the omnipresent "terrorist wars" to gain control over the dwindling natural resources.

Therefore, when the waters began to rise all around the world, nobody really remembered what had caused this to happen in the first place, except for the handful of scientists like Seymour Davidson and Phyllis Bowdler, who were busily being moved, from cave to cave, with their band of communist revolutionaries and Neanderthals.

* * *

The oceans' temperatures had finally reached a level that began melting Greenland's ice sheets and both the North and South Poles. Had that been the only catastrophe, perhaps the

world would have been spared by merely the submergence of the low-lying areas of the earth like Los Angeles or Bangladesh. However, Nature had other plans, and a giant meteor, given the quaint acronym "DX50," impacted the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii at 0622 Zulu, May 1, 2322. No country had attempted to explode the meteor, as it was too large (over 300 miles in circumference), and each country was afraid that such an attempt would trigger other nuclear missiles from computer-generated defense systems that had been developed since 2015. The result was that the meteor's impacting the ocean caused the "tipping point," or the "final straw," which led to the second "Great Flood" all over the planet. The only survivors were those living in the mountainous regions of the world, and, perhaps coincidentally, the largest group of strong, trained and intelligently natural race were those Neanderthals in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra in Cuba.

* * *

*May 4, 2322, Sierra Maestra Mountains*

*My dreams have come to pass, and I am leading my tribe into the light. It's just as it was foretold in my dreams, and so it shall be. My birth was from the deep love of my mother, a survivor of the human terrorists, who raided and slaughtered her people to distribute their flesh in the teeming cities. These erect humans are so ignorant to her ways! Instead of learning from her, they fought her, and the resulting cleansing was an inevitable conclusion to their dynasties.*

*My new parents, the good doctors, are now old and they need rest. We will find a new cavern where they can live and study. The humans never let them do that. My new parents were constantly ordered about by the ones with the weapons—the ones with the control—but now the power is in our hands. The communists—the Gamboa brothers and their followers--were easily overthrown. In their lust for power they failed to see what our abilities really were. Instead, they believed in their own rhetoric, which was false, and they left us alone too long on their raids into villages and towns, and we soon began communicating our own revolt. When the floods came, it took only two days for my people to wrest control from these puny bandits.*

*My parents say we will not need the chimpanzees anymore to propagate our kind. The first female has been created! She is so beautiful, so perfect, with her mammalian globes of sustenance, her feet firmly planted in the earth, her eyes constantly on her family. We need such order and love to survive these coming days of rebirth. What will this New World be like? It is up to us, I know, but the dreams will come again, and I will communicate my plan, and the New World will evolve once more. I must now lead my people up into the light. The waters will one day recede; I know it because my new parents told me. Praise the world—it's a rainbow! This is surely a sign of a new covenant between my people and Hers. It is, indeed, the dawning of a new day on Earth.*

## Big Mother

Is it so much to ask a son? I just want him to call me once in a while on the weekends. A visit on the holidays wouldn't be so bad either, would it? No, all he does is hole himself up in that drafty little apartment of his, and write to me in his little chicken scratches, and tell me he's being worked to death by whom? By Big Brother, of course! He says he's not even supposed to be writing things down, and that Big Brother is always watching him! Where does he come up with these crazy ideas? One minute he's all elated because of his new job at Apple, and the next minute Steve Jobs is Big Brother? What is a mother to do?

He keeps telling me in his letters that all they have him doing is changing all the "news" so that it makes Big Brother look good. He says he's working for the Ministry of Truth, or Minitrue, but that's really not what it means, he tells me. The only "truth" comes from what Big Brother tells him is the truth. So, I tell him, how does he expect to keep a job in these recession times if he talks about his employer that way? And does he thank me for any advice I give him? Never! He just goes on about the lousy food he has to eat in the cafeteria and how now his boss is making everybody learn a new language. Newspeak! How original is that? I ask him if he's saying that I speak in Oldspeak, and he says, "Exactly." He tells me his Big Brother made them come to a big meeting where this Mister Big comes down from the clouds holding a tablet like he was Moses or somebody. He says it's the new iPad and that it will forever change the way people get their communications. They're being made by friends in Eurasia. Is that so bad? So you learn a new thing or two on the job. What's the big deal? Winston, you have to overcome your feelings of inadequacy. Yes, the phonebook is filled with "Smiths," but you have a good job, so hold your head high, and don't talk about your boss the way you do!

So what do I get for being a good mother? He tells me the other day that he's joining a group that is fighting Big Brother and the whole business! Some guy named O'Brien told him about this group and that they follow some terrorist leader named Goldstein, Goldberg or Goldfarb. There they go again. Picking on the poor Jews! Just like these people to need some Semitic fall guy to keep up the hate groups. How does my son get involved in such shenanigans? I certainly didn't raise him to be so gullible! They've even got my boy drinking! He calls it "Victory gin." What victory? Is that like Mission Accomplished? He thinks everything is political, even boozing it up.

And what does all this boozing lead to? That's right. He recently told me he met some woman! Oh, but does he meet someone at *shul* or, God forbid, somebody nice nearby that I might have introduced him to? Not my son, Winston! He says he meets her when he falls down after tripping over her! Was it the Victory gin? That will most certainly make you fall head-over-heels for the nearest hog at the end of the bar at two AM. No, he tells me, she passes him a message that says "I love you," and now she's going to meet him at a secret rendezvous he has all picked out, so Big Brother can't see them. How do you expect to get a pay raise, I tell him, if you're *schtuping* another employee? It's not like that, mother, he tells me. She's in his new revolutionary group, too! How marvelous! Two of you together fighting your boss. Why didn't I think of that?

And he's constantly in front of that telescreen. Not a common old television for my boy. No, this one is hooked right up to Big Brother! He says he can get the words right from his boss's mouth, so to speak. I tell him he'll soon go blind if he doesn't watch out. Get out of your cubicle and get some exercise, I say, and maybe you'll lose that pasty complexion. I want him to see a doctor about the ulcer on his leg. I asked him if Big Brother could afford health insurance,

and he never tells me. Mister secret agent man, my son, so full of conspiracy theories and politics, he'll put me in an early grave.

And then what happens? He tells me he's had a meeting with this O'Brien, and this *momzer* tells him to read a forbidden book by their leader, this Immanuel Goldstein. Winston tells me this book has a lot of political mumbo-jumbo about Doublethink and how Big Brother tries to have you believe two opposite things at the same time until you get to believing anything that's told to you. Is that any different than watching Oprah or Dr. Phil? At least I wouldn't lose my job over watching TV. And, this O'Brien. How can you trust him? Just because a person says he's a big shot doesn't mean you can believe him. Oh no, says my boy, he's the real deal. He tells Winston to keep fighting Big Brother and others will be with him in the common cause.

What would you expect your son to be doing for entertainment working at a good job for Apple? Playing a little poker with the boys, perhaps? Golfing or tennis? No, not my son Winston. What if I told you he goes inside a theater and stares up at a screen, with everybody else sitting there with him, wearing the same drab gray, and all they do is watch unflattering and rather anti-Semitic photographs of his secret hero, Mister Goldberg—excuse me—Mister Goldstein? And they all boo and hiss and throw stuff at the screen for a whole two minutes. That's what they call the "Two Minute Hate." What do you do for five minutes or, God forbid, a whole hour, I ask him? I know! They put Big Mother's picture up there for an hour, why not? What's the difference? Hate is hate, that's what I say. A mother's love just doesn't go very far in these days of economic inflation and love that depresses you so much that you have to hide-out in some dingy little room to get intimate with each other.

I was really afraid after I didn't hear from my son for several weeks. I thought he might have eloped with this woman or maybe he was being recruited by some *real* terrorists like Osama bin Laden or the Moonies. But, lo and behold, there he is, standing at my doorstep one fine morning wearing a tee-shirt that says, "*WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH"*. I was so happy to see him, I even ignored the sarcasm, and I just couldn't let go of him. Certainly, he was quite thin, and he just didn't seem to have the same zest for life he had as a boy growing up. I thought all I had to do was get him fed with some nice chicken soup and we could talk about it. But, no, he said he didn't want to talk about it at all. I asked him what had happened, and he just stared into space, and he didn't even seem to understand what I was asking him.

After a month of living at home, I was able to finagle a date with Ellen Levine, the daughter of my doctor, Seth Levine. She was quite attractive, and I thought good things when they left for dinner and a show. However, when only Ellen returned, later that night, she was quite distressed. I asked her what happened, and she explained an event that I still have no explanation for. She said that they both had an excellent dinner, at an Italian restaurant, Winston's favorite food, and then they made it to the theater just as the feature attraction began. The strange event occurred when, during an admittedly dramatic and graphic scene, Winston suddenly screamed out, "Room 101! Julia!" and ran out of the theater and into the night. Ellen said she looked all over the parking lot, and even into nearby drinking and eating establishments, to no avail. Winston was not to be found. "What could I have done, Mrs. Smith?" she asked me, a most sensitive girl, with tears of sorrow filling her eyes. I asked her the obvious question. What was the scene about? "Oh, it was pretty scary," she told me. "It was a remake of that old horror movie, *Willard*, about the guy who keeps pet rats and has them attack his evil boss."

Oh yes, I see! I told her. Winston has been having problems with his employer lately. Perhaps the scene triggered something in his vivid imagination. I've tried to get him to see a

psychiatrist. He just gives me that stare. Perhaps you can talk to him. Ellen gave a sigh and said, “I don’t know, Mrs. Smith. I’m more concerned by the fact that he yelled out that woman’s name. Julia. The last thing I would want to do is cause Winston to lose face by mentioning someone he once felt passionate about.” Oh, I wouldn’t worry, I told her. He’s been eating my heart out for years!

# Bug Motel

I consider myself quite fortunate to be an entomologist working as the owner and manager of a motel in the desert. The desert is precisely the macrocosm wherein I can experiment inside my microcosm of rooms. As both a medical doctor and rogue geneticist, I know that my scientific subjects must be chosen with systematic care, as I know my work cannot continue unless my subjects are carefully screened. Thankfully, there is no heritage from which my subjects evolve. They have no past, much like the skeletons I find in the desert, after I have left them there for weeks; they are bone-dry and without redemption. There is nobody to shed a light of recognition that can be traced to its source and thus to my motel.

I keep all the florescent lights on my motel sign brightly lit and functioning to attract real insects: "Bug Motel" flashes to passersby on Highway 167 in Arizona. People are pleasantly amused by the humorous association with "roach motel" or "ant motel," and they often remark to me about the humor of the name. I place photographs of my beloved insects inside each room in my "moth-el." Some do have colorful photos of moths, butterflies, and my favorite little colonialists (ants, bees, termites and wasps). One of my inside jokes is a photo of two praying mantises who are mating. The "joke" is that after the mating has completed the larger female devours the male because he is, quite simply, the closest high energy meal available! My computer nook is located in the exact center of all of the specimens of insects inside my main office. These insects are encased inside beakers, pressed between panes of glass, suspended in amber or formaldehyde, littered within books on my couch and on the computer table, inside synthetic pages, all carefully numbered and catalogued to correspond with my computer's database.

After I complete the background check of the specimen, on my computer, I take my experiment sheet for that particular trial day and leave my Manager's Office, picking up any tools I might need along the way. I like to enter their dreams, so to speak, at four in the morning, when they are in their peak REM state. I imagine them concocting a lucid dream as I tie them up, mask their mouths, and prepare them for the specific research at hand.

What experiments have I conducted? I could read my list of executive summaries to you, but I prefer to use my idiosyncratic memory. I have created human beehives, about which I have noted that bees completely enjoy building their honeycombs inside the carved-out cavern of a large, living colon. They produce, with the assistance of a non-Africanized queen (Africanized bees are *not* killer bees but merely aggressive females that have taken over much of the American countryside through their "radical revolutions" inside once peaceful honey-bee hives) a colony of splendid workers, who fly in and out of the human intestine with zealous joy! I cut off the large colon from its smaller cousin to make my bee swarm's home less prone to the drip, drip, drip of stomach acid, and tie it off the same way as when American "fatties" go to surgeons to have their colons tied-off to prevent unwanted weight gain. I have noticed that the human specimen is able to live almost an entire month as a substitute hive, until the brain becomes overcome with sugar, which seeps into the stomach lining of the large intestine where the honey is made, and due to lack of a proper protein diet, and the body, therefore, most regrettably for the experiment, goes into morbid, anaphylactic shock. I see it as rather ironic, in that just below that starving, twisted mouth, lays a cornucopia of a peaceful, industrious life beyond reach. In keeping with my sense of innately scientific irony, I always choose a fat person for this experiment. I am not Dr. Oz, and this is *not* the *Taking it Off Show*. America is over-populated

with these starch-bloated icons to greed and gluttony, so it is not very difficult to find a specimen of this sort wandering into my motel. Families tend to ignore these porkers like a Jewish plague.

After I post my videos and laboratory reports, there is usually a flood of emails admiring me for my "realistic computer graphics," and my "brilliant satirical statement of juxtaposing the sad disappearance of the American honey-bee with the ignoble tub-of-lard who rightfully deserves such a fate!" I always find it quite amusing to see how the media's desensitization of the American psyche has worked in my favor. I have never received one single email that questioned whether or not my human subject is real, or not. They always "assume" (makes an "ass" of "u" and "me") that what they are viewing is an artistic, albeit realistic, computer rendering from the mind of a truly artistic master. How can I argue with them?

I have done similar experiments using colon colonies of ants, bumblebees, roaches, wasps, hornets and termites and locate them in other parts of the body: mouth, nose, chest cavity, anus, breasts and pubic area. Each experiment is a valuable addition to the American entomological landscape, and I can see why my web site has now become so popular. There is nothing more fascinating than the sight of insects comingling with the live, human torso. I use video and stop-action, color photos, and the reactions I get from viewers are always quite enthralling for me to read. Their love of my work, in fact, keeps me attempting even more avant-garde and ambitious experiments.

For example, after the movie version of that final and most disastrous Hannibal Lecter book came out, I was so outraged at the climax, which showed the graphic dining from the severed skull of a human head (I know, live monkey brains are an Asian delicacy!), I had to counter that outrageous horror by creating my much more visually comforting image: as the top of my human cranium is lifted, hundreds of black-and-orange Monarch butterflies erupt from the brain's nest, filling the room with their free-spirited fluttering of joy! Now isn't that a much more symbolically lucid and visually stimulating image? I believe even the poet William Blake would be entertained. My site's visitors thought so. They praised me for my "wedding of the corrupt human brain with the natural freedom of Nature" and "the precise moment I chose to open the top of the head to reveal a burst of such spectacular metamorphoses is a wonder to behold!" I was also praised as a "realistic renderer of Monty Python proportions!"

I received the email that changed my life shortly after Arizona passed the new anti-immigration law, Senate Bill 1070, which gave state and city police the right to arrest any person who was in Arizona illegally. Also, "Any person who is arrested shall have their immigration status determined before the person is released." I am a scientist, and politics usually doesn't enter into my sphere of influence, unless it affects me directly, and this particular message came from someone who explained when and how I was going to be affected.

I was up late one night, uploading my latest videos onto my private server, when I glanced at a message that said in the subject line: I know what you are! As I read down the lines, I sat up straight in my swivel chair and concentrated on the text:

> Dear Dr. Milton Farnaby,
> I know you think you have others fooled by your cleverly designed "artistic" web site, but I know what you're doing, and I want you to realize that unless you cooperate 100% with me and my group, we will most certainly report you to the proper authorities. We have a problem with illegals occupying our country. They are the scum of the earth, and they are pouring into our beloved nation by the thousands every day. They are, for the most part, drug dealers, gangsters,

> prostitutes, drug users and unwanted homosexuals. These are the violators of our Constitution who need to be punished in a unique way that will show others what kind of real justice is going to come their way if they enter our country without going through legal channels. As the government of Mexico is now discovering, the only thing these criminals understand is force. That's how they do things, so that's what they need to receive upon arrival. This is where you come in. This mongrel President is now challenging our law in the courts, and we may not get it approved until it reaches our Supreme Court, which will, most likely, ultimately approve of our methods. In the meantime, however, we need to show these people the kind of justice we believe in. We need to meet to discuss exactly what kind of punishment will "fit the crime," so to speak, and it will also be important that a web site is created to show our tactics to others out there who might attempt to cross the borders on their own. Just as we used to have public hangings, pillories and other displays that demonstrated just how painful it can be to breach our laws, our display will be even more extreme in order to fit these emergency times! Call me at: 555-777-2386 and we will arrange a meeting.

The successful breaching of my research by this political group, which never gave me their name, posed an immediate dilemma. How was I going to handle this blackmail and still remain free to practice my experiments? The man I eventually met at a back booth, inside a Denny's in Flagstaff, was in his early forties. He called himself "Agent N," and he wore a Sedona red teeshirt and blue jeans, with a big American flag pin on his red cowboy hat's center. His streaking gray-black hair was curly and his face showed the rugged lines and pouches of fatty, sunburned skin that meant he was out-of-doors quite often. I, on the other hand, only went outside to deposit my motel and medical practice money at the night drop and to deposit my used specimens in the desert. My skin, therefore, maintains the regally noble pallor of an intellectual scientist. When my scientific freedom is being challenged, I become enraged, and that was how I felt as I listened to this man.

"We will bring you the alien criminals, one at a time, and you will be informed as to their offenses beforehand, so you can decide on the equitable punishment. We want to display a punishment that will deter any future indiscretions by other violators. We are privy to their web sites and to their communications, so we will be able to send out whatever videos and photographs you produce so they will see them in living color. I have enjoyed the creativity in your enterprise, Dr. Farnaby, and that is why we have chosen you. Of course, you will communicate directly with me when you have come up with a suitable punishment, so I can pass it along to my organization, and we will then give you the go-ahead to proceed or perhaps we might want you to revise your punishment in some specific way. Once we give our approval, you will be free to complete the sentence on the convicted. If, at any time, however, we see that you have refused to cooperate or you have not complied with our alterations, you will be immediately reported to appropriate authorities. Is that clear?" He smugly extended a hand, and I looked at it for a minute before I extended my own.

"I shall await your instructions," I said, and I stood up to go. As I looked down at him sitting inside the booth, I imagined a rather ingenious nest of infantile rattlesnakes implanted judiciously inside his pot belly.

"We will email you soon, Dr. Farnaby. We are being pressured by these liberals in power, so time is of the essence," he said.

The first specimen (I refuse to call them "aliens" or "criminals") I was to receive for "punishment display" was, I was told, a Mexican drug dealer and pimp. As I had been planning my own experiments using this type of miscreant, who often comes to my motel to set-up shop, I was ready to apply an experiment that was both unique and fitting to this person's employment. I must state, at this juncture, that when I work on my own, I apply no "anti-social" or "moralist" label on my specimens. Science does not moralize; it merely utilizes subjects for its own purposes. However, since I knew these blackmailing cads were driven by their own moral superiority, I had to explain the socio-political ironies of my experiment in order to diffuse any possible objections on their part.

Therefore, this was my rather extended explanation, for which I received an almost immediate endorsement from the assorted "lawmakers" behind this imposition on my scientific independence.

Hypothesis: Since persons who victimize society by endangering it with narcotics that impair thinking and prostitutes that spread diseases, this criminal activity, therefore, increases addiction so as to encircle the user in a monetarily dependent relationship with the dealer/pimp in an endless loop, which thereby destroys the peaceful choice mechanism available in a Capitalistic society.

As a result, the punishment I propose is to mark said purveyor of lust and narcosis, with a colony of imbedded "bed bugs" (*Cimicidae*). Just as the early Colonies in America would mark the violator in some way appropriate to their sin, so shall I mark said convict with an appropriately demonstrative collection of little "Communists" to inhabit their skin, as Poe would say, "forevermore!" This is appropriately symbolic in that the dealer/pimp's "consumer" is, quite often, using a bed in order to get appropriately "wasted" or "screwed" by the dealer\pimp's "products."

Since my insects only become "red" or symbolically "Communist" after they have engorged themselves with human blood (they are grayish little flatlanders during their fasting period, of up to a whole year, when no humans are around), my implanting these little demons beneath the second layer of epidermis, is nothing short of ingenious. The image of this convict filled with running bed bugs who can, willy-nilly, drink from the trough of his continuously venous body, and thus remain as crimson as the hammer and sickle, will serve as an appropriate emblem of his transgressions. We can get appropriate close-ups of these insects as they industriously travel beneath his skin to stop at a blood oasis, from time to time, and this will appear to the viewer as small coagulations of red on the map of his infamy. We can adorn this convict with the background of a Communist flag, which would be a direct insult to his criminal code of fascist domination, and this could further reinforce the image of malfeasance you are trying to communicate to your audience.

My blackmailers were, of course, quite exuberant over my proposal, and they accepted it wholeheartedly. I also went to work creating their web site (on their server), and the resulting display of streaming videos and warnings of similar punishment to those who do not obey, were quite striking. We exchanged emails of approval and praise, and this went on for about four months, until, one day, I wrote this text message:

I must meet with you immediately! I cannot create under your constant flow of demands unless we can work out some mutually beneficial means of communication. I will be at the Denny's in Flagstaff to discuss our problem at three this afternoon. And I signed off.

He appeared again, the same smugness on his face and his attention riveted on me; so much so, that when I put the mescaline and Rohypnol in his drink he barely noticed it. Perhaps

there was a small dilation of the pupils and wince at the corners of his mouth, but when I led him out of the restaurant, he was quite egoless and submissive, and he was remarking to me how magnificent the light shined through the cumulous clouds above us, as we drove back to my motel.

After I appropriately tied him up and masked his mouth, he gradually came out of his drug-induced state. I took him into my laboratory, a large room behind my Manager's Office. I lay him down on the gurney and turned on the overhead light. The fluorescent lighting brought out all the colors in the lab, including his suntanned face, arms and legs. He looked rather dirty amidst the pristine paleness of my medical and genetic engineering tools and cleanly antiseptic shelves and drawers.

"You have made several miscalculations, Agent N," I told him, in my kindest bedside manner. "First of all, you did not know my physical address when you began your blackmailing scheme. Therefore, it was always my choice to play along with your crimes. I only did this because you and your group interested me in a vaguely primitive way. I have always been fascinated by the collections of human moralists who fancy they know the exact nature of good and evil. This kind of moralist inevitably breeds terrorists, anarchists and other collectivist entities that have no understanding of what makes one truly free. Therefore, since you have intuited your own doom, just as the Buddhists posit life in our own suffering world, your example shall also be quite appropriate to your karmic activities."

I then rolled his body on the gurney inside to what I like to call my "splicing chamber," where my latest genetic experiments are kept until I can record them for future posterity. This particular experiment had been created for this group and for this man, in particular. I especially enjoyed the moment when I wheeled Agent N. inside the dark room. Darkness before the dawn is always my most favorite and most suspenseful moment in existence. It represents the moment of creation that is so important to the psyche of a true scientist. I flicked on the light and watched his eyes. They became large, oracular, and terrified. Their green-gray brilliance glimmered at the sight of my genius creation! He was momentarily able to sit-up on the gurney, he was so started by adrenaline rushing through his system, but he soon slammed back down.

"He *is* a beauty, is he not?" I asked. *Goliathus cacicus*, the largest beetle in existence was used in my gene splice, along with a pinch of human growth hormone, together with our friend, the bed bug, to produce what you see in front of you. At five feet on its legs, it certainly has a deeper brown color than usual, and yet the six segmented legs are quite the same, along with its syringe-like, protuberant mouth, which is, of course, used to inject into the skin of the host and then extract its blood." I could see his face becoming frantic, so I decided to get right down to business.

"Let me get the digital camera before we begin," I told him, and I picked the camera up from the shelf near me, adjusted the focus while peering at the insect at a distance, and then closer as I focused on Agent N. "I believe that the worst event that could happen to someone in your organization would be to have sexual relations with an alien presence would it not?" His eyes become even wider. "Therefore, since this giant insect has a rather interesting mating ritual, I thought it might benefit your group to see how getting it on with a *real* alien might look. First, let me duck back into my lab to get the final tools I need before we proceed with our experiment."

I slipped back into my outer lab, retrieved my notch, and came, audibly giggling, back into the nesting room. I then fastened the "mating notch" on Agent N's back, just below his shoulder blades. After closing and locking the door to our nest, I then untied him, so that he

could roam free around the room during the mating ritual. Finally, I unmasked his mouth. He, most naturally, let out a rather piercing scream before cursing at me, "What kind of monster are you? Get me the hell out of here right now!" He then tried to scramble toward the door, but it was no use. I sprayed his body with the odor of a blood-filled female *Cimex lectularius*, and I began to record the resultant activities.

The giant male immediately began to circle Agent N., like the good prospective husband that he was, and he, coy female that he was pretending to be, began to resist the bug's advances by attempting to run, helter-skelter, around the room in circles. Agent N. fell several times in the attempt to elude his pursuer, but the insect's six long legs eventually out-distanced the human's feeble two, so that the insect was now grasping Agent N's body between his hairy legs, so that his sex organ at the base of his bottom was poised just over the "notch" on Agent N's back.

At this point, I thought it might be informative to both the audience and to Agent N., who was a most interested party in this experiment, about the rather fascinating details of the bed bug's mating performance. "Now we come to the moment of truth, which we entomologists like to call 'traumatic insemination.' You might have noticed the notch I have placed on your back?"

He turned his head wildly and screamed at me, "You fiend!"

"Yes, well that notch should save you some rather unsavory discomfort, for the moment. You see, bed bugs don't mate in the usual way. The males inject their sperm into the females by using that sword-like weapon at the bottom of their abdomen. The females, on the other hand, have adapted to this rather injurious coitus by developing a hard notch where sperm can be collected before it is released into the bloodstream."

"Bloodstream?" he screamed again, perhaps an octave higher.

"Yes, instead of being directly injected, your notch is especially developed by me to duplicate the female bed bug's notch. Thus, it will not allow you to be poisoned by the male's sperm as it flows through your body to your heart. No, I am much more humane than you think I am, Agent N." The giant male was now using his penis to lance the notch and deposit his semen. His whole body shook as he did this, and, of course, Agent N's body shook right along with him. "Isn't love grand?" I rhetorically asked.

"Get this thing off of me!" he spat out, as the extra sperm drooled over his notch and ran down over his back in dribbling rivulets of gray liquid. My camera was in its glory!

"Do you see the appropriateness of this symbolic act yet, Agent N.?" I asked.

"Are you crazy?" he asked, pushing his way free from the now-exhausted male and standing, shaking like a leaf, next to the gurney.

"Your organization represents Fascism at its worst. You not only want to arrest and detain people of color because you have judged them guilty, but you also want to stop me from advancing science. I now speak in the name of freedom everywhere, when I tell you that what you are now going to experience is a symbol to freedom lovers everywhere!

"Let me out of here right now, Farnaby. I won't press charges if you stop this fiasco immediately," said Agent N.

"Don't you want to tell the audience your real name before I push this button?" I asked, holding my right forefinger over a tiny remote control in my right hand.

"Are you insane?" asked Agent N.

"Have it your way," I said, and I pushed the button, knowing that it would trigger the two receivers I had set-up earlier. One was inside the lover's notch on his back, and the other was on a ceiling panel above Agent N's head. The giant American flag came down and formed a back-drop behind Agent N. Next, the secret ingredient I had earlier mixed inside the notch was now

being injected into N's bloodstream. His face began to contract in agony, so I thought I would conclude my presentation for the viewers.

"I made quite a lengthy search in order to come up with an appropriately symbolic venom for you, Agent N. Finally, I came up with a superbly ironic method that fit in well with your organization's goals. The Brazilian Wandering Spider has the most toxic venom known to science. He represents your worst nightmare. You detest people who think they can wander freely, wherever they please, without answering to any border enforcers or Fascist groups like yours. The Wandering Spider does this, and now its poison is inside your body. However, your death will not come right away. No. There is a specific reason why I chose this venom. It has a most bombastically pleasant result, and I am certain the audience will appreciate the irony of your happy death."

"What do you m . . . m . . . mean?" The words came gurgling from Agent N's now foaming mouth.

"Do you know what priapism is?" I asked.

My specimen shook his head, a painful, excruciating look on his face as he slumped down to the floor and lay on his back.

"As a grand finale, ladies and gentlemen, please keep your eyes on the crotch of Agent N. Also, in the name of science, I want to record the technical explanation of this experiment for history. *P. nigriventer* venom contains a potent neurotoxin

, known as PhTx3, which acts as a broad-spectrum calcium channel

blocker that inhibits glutamate release, calcium uptake and also glutamate uptake in neural synapses

. At deadly concentrations, as is the case with Agent N., this neurotoxin causes loss of muscle control and breathing problems, resulting in paralysis and eventual asphyxiation. In addition, the venom causes intense pain and inflammation following an attack due to an excitatory effect the venom has on the serotonin
5-HT4 receptors of sensory nerves. This sensory nerve stimulation causes a release of neuropeptides, such as substance P,
which triggers inflammation and pain."

I watched and recorded, as Agent N's crotch began to rise, like the sun at dawn, from the engorgement of his erect penis. "Aside from causing intense pain, the venom of the spider can also cause priapism

in humans. Erections resulting from the venom are uncomfortable, can last for many hours, and can lead to impotence. A component of the venom (Tx2-6

) is being studied for use in erectile dysfunction treatments."

I took a deep breath and finally continued. "I am going to release Agent N. and perhaps his organization can even find the rare antidote to the venom of the Brazilian Wandering Spider. The speed of the internet is quite miraculous, now isn't it? However, if anybody is now going to attempt to track me down or see if they can find my address, be forewarned. I will be soon moving my location, and the security systems I will develop will be much better than WikiLeaks. Agent N. and his organization have now politicized me, and this is not good news for society-at-large. In fact, if you thought Spider Man had a reason for revenge, you have not seen the full force of my scientific fury! I bid you all adieu! I'll perhaps see you in your dreams, at around four in the morning. Now watch my little creation while he does his dance for the camera!

I continued filming as my big red bed bug did his dance, raising himself on his back legs, pawing the air like a victorious stallion. If I weren't such a serious scientist, I could swear there was also a smile erupting under his waving antennae.

If you liked this book then please visit Jim Musgrave's author page to see more great titles.

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Sincerely,
Jim Musgrave
Author, *Forevermore*, "A Pat O'Malley Mystery"